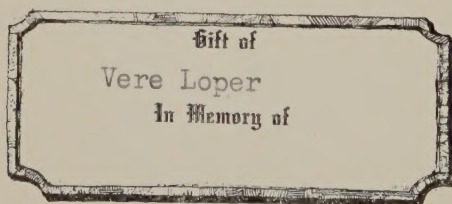


CREATIVE  
UNDERSTANDING



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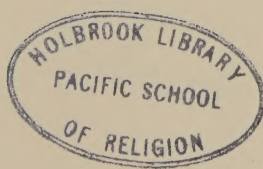


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CREATIVE UNDERSTANDING



BOOKS BY

*Count Hermann Keyserling*

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THE RECOVERY OF TRUTH

CREATIVE UNDERSTANDING

THE TRAVEL DIARY OF A PHILOSOPHER

*(Two Volumes)*

THE WORLD IN THE MAKING

EUROPE

*Editor of*

THE BOOK OF MARRIAGE



*Count Hermann Keyserling*

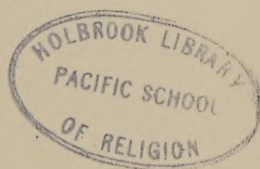
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# CREATIVE UNDERSTANDING

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BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE TRAVEL  
DIARY OF A PHILOSOPHER,"  
"EUROPE," ETC.



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## Introduction

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THE reader must know something of the history of this book, in order to read and understand it aright from the outset. For it has not been written as books usually are. I had been almost a complete solitary up to my fortieth year. I was hardly in touch with my fellow men; if I ever lectured—a thing which did not happen more than three or four times in the course of all those years—I did so without my lecturing bringing me into any sort of communion with my audience. The *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* was the ultimate expression of this solitary and contemplative phase of my life. Then came the great catastrophe which robbed me of my possessions and made me an exile, forcing me to make a new start in life. The catastrophe which I have described at length in the introduction to *The World in the Making* coincided with an inner crisis, out of which I emerged from the contemplative introvert I had been as a man of intense activity. Accordingly, that tendency of mine to understand or to apprehend the meaning of life changed into the desire to give it a new meaning. This led to the foundation of the School of Wisdom at Darmstadt. But at the time of its foundation I was not inwardly ready in all respects—according to my temperament, I rather founded it in order to find out what my aims really were, just as I generally write not because I know, but in order to get to know by raising subconscious knowledge into the field of vision of the conscious.

Thus, the School of Wisdom and its teaching developed and took shape as an expression of my own inward growth and development. The lectures I consecutively delivered mark the various stages of this process.

When the publication of my teaching in book form became necessary, I had no choice but to work into a whole what I had said in the course of time; as far as I can judge for the present, I have completed this task of presenting my doctrine as a process of evolution with the book *The Recovery of Truth*, which everybody should read as a supplement to this; indeed, nobody can know what I really stand for as a philosopher unless he has read "The Ethical Problem" and the "Religious Problem" in the latter book, as well as the chapter *Jesus der Magier in Menschen als Sinnbilder*, available so far only, apart from the German original, in a French translation (*Figures Symboliques*, published by the Librairie Stock in Paris). But on the other hand, *Creative Understanding* represents the introduction into my philosophy, and no one will really understand *The Recovery of Truth* who has not read the former.

*Creative Understanding*, then, is a record of inner experience of a peculiar kind. And herein, to my mind, lies whatever suggestive qualities it has. I am essentially an improviser, an extempore poet; my deeps are more effectually called into activity by a practical situation I have to show myself equal to than by the best of abstract plans. I have felt this even more distinctly during the years I have spent on working out the doctrine of the School of Wisdom than at the time I was writing the *Travel Diary*. I first became conscious of the new spiritual phase I had passed into, when asked by the Kant Society to give a lecture on Occidental and Oriental ways



of thinking; and I became fully aware of the real aims of the School of Wisdom only when forced to give a series of lectures on that theme about a year after its foundation. I have been brought nearer to what I call Sense-perception step by step through every subsequent expression that was asked of me. This being the case, I could not doubt that the chronological order was the very best to adopt for the intended book. Accordingly, I have written it thus. Of course, for this occasion, every single lecture and essay has been rewritten (I have left only the indications of a political nature untouched, giving them all as they were first noted down as a proof that Sense-perception makes it possible to know beforehand what is not to be inferred by mere knowledge of facts). Of course I have eliminated as many repetitions as possible. Nevertheless, the style of the book remains uncommon by reason of its general arrangement; it has its precursors only in music, but none in philosophical literature. The book begins with the lecture I delivered in Berlin for the Kant Society on January 15, 1920: most of the leading tunes of the whole are sounded, almost every subsequent theme is touched upon, but none is worked out. The second lecture, first sketched in the autumn of the same year, offers the first circumstantial elaboration on a large scale. It is followed by a sudden change of tone; the practical point of view comes in and remains decisive to the end. The general outlines of the later composition are given in the three lectures belonging to the part called "Fundamental Problems," the first dating from the spring of 1920, the second from the autumn of that year, and the third from the autumn of the preceding year. Then it is filled out and at the same time goes on gaining in depth. The first cycle of

lectures, with which I inaugurated the School of Wisdom on November 23, 1920, for the most part offers surface and colour; in the second (delivered at the second convention of the School of Wisdom at Darmstadt, May 23-25, 1921) I have added the third dimension to the musical scenery; in the third (delivered on the same occasion, September 25-27, 1921) I unite the themes into one final, concentrated flourish of trumpets.

The book, viewed figuratively, has something of the shape of a wedge, its basis corresponding to the first lecture and its point to the last. It follows that the book has been composed more or less like a piece of music—*i.e.*, as a chronological sequence. Therefore, it has to be read without a break from beginning to end, if it is to be understood at all as a whole. Nor should the repetitions be skipped, because they have the significance of rhythmic recurrences of the same themes in music. Whoever reads *Creative Understanding* in this fashion, will experience just what happened to me while I was writing it in the given order: every sentence will make clearer to him what I mean and what I intend; he is the more sure to experience it the less intervals and pauses not of my own creation he introduces, the more willingly he surrenders to the given rhythm, letting the special style of the book act upon his soul—a specialty characterized by the problems' being successively put up for discussion, successively elucidated and brought to a point as a finale. Whoever will have read me in the way I have pointed out, will perhaps not remember exactly what I have said, when he puts down the book, but instead the special character of my spiritual life may have become natural to him, so that he will find natural and obvious most of the insights to which the considerations of this book are

intended to lead—though at the beginning they seemed ever so novel to him. Now, this is exactly what I intend. I do not intend to offer a complete theoretical system, I want to give living impulses; I do not mean to put up an image before my readers, I wish to change them, to change them into such as consider the world from an independent and superior point of view and live on a higher level than they lived on before. It is to initiate this process that the special rhythm of *Creative Understanding* is calculated.

But as I said before, this end is only to be achieved if the book is read in the right way. As an introduction to my public lectures I generally ask my listeners on no account to assume the discursive attitude, on no account to begin thinking while listening; I ask them to pay as little attention as possible to the contents and facts as such, but simply to let the intrinsic power of spiritual truth act upon them. I put the same request to my readers this time, with this difference only, that I wish my book to be read in this way only, when taken up for the first time.

BUT ere I conclude I think it advisable to tell my readers as much as can be told of the School of Wisdom. For *Creative Understanding* really means an introduction to what it stands for; my lectures refer to it again and again. I might, of course, give an account of the School as an appendix to this book. But given the concrete quality of the American mind, I think it better to begin with this statement. And here I cannot do better than reprint as it is what I wrote about my School for American readers in the *Forum* of February, 1928. I consider it advisable to give even the general introduc-

tion this article contains; it will make it easier for my readers to follow the more difficult arguments of the book itself.

The specific quality of every form of life, like that of every form of art, depends on this, that the same elements figure as parts and organs of a different whole in every particular case. Just so, it is not the contents which distinguish one culture from another; it is the different adjustment assumed in each case by the selfsame psychical and spiritual material. For the difference in quality which this material acquires in each case is never due to elementary material differences. Similar to the chemical elements, all of which are ultimately composed of electrons, the elementary forms of life hardly ever change, because human nature as such never changes. The difference in quality is due to the different significance the material derives from the pre-existing whole, as the meaning of the same words varies according to the general meaning of the sentence they serve to express. In this sense, the Christianization of the Western World meant, at bottom, less the victory of a new definite faith than the supersession of the psychological adjustment of Antiquity by a new one. Antique man had his centre within him. The Christian located the centre of his being in a sphere beyond himself and toward this sphere he assumed an attitude of devotion and submission. The determining centre of the man of Antiquity was mind; that of the Christian was his soul. Accordingly, different values ruled life in each case. But the elementary facts of life remained unchanged.

From the Renaissance and Reformation onward, the psychic organism of Western man began to undergo a new metamorphosis. The centre of gravity within him



began to shift back from the soul to the mind; a new masculine phase in history set in. But as the transition was a gradual one, very few were aware of the change which was taking place. But eventually, at the threshold of the twentieth century, something happened similar to the change of heating water when the slowly rising temperature passes from 99 to 100 C.; that is to say, a qualitative change took place. Of a sudden, the traditional state appeared obsolete. Accordingly, the destructive powers within the soul gained the upper hand. The World War and the World Revolution—both events of a fated and cosmic quality, never to be explained by the doings or omissions of incapable statesmen—were the final results. Ever since, people are trying to mend the state of the world by tackling the problem from the outside. But they do not succeed, because the external chaos is only the outward expression of a constitutional crisis within the soul. As I have shown in *The World in the Making*, the key to the problem lies in the fact that the centre of gravity within man has passed from the untransferable to the transferable, and that for this reason all traditional solutions of the problem of life have psychologically lost their validity. New positions and new solutions are now necessary if out of the Chaos a new Cosmos is to emerge, in almost as radical a sense as at the time when the pagan world had to die to make room for the Christian world. At this crisis, the decisive point is that humanity must reach a higher and more creative understanding, that it must make the intellect subservient to what the early Christians called *Lógos spermatikós*, that it must venture further on the line of independence and responsibility;

that a wider kind of sympathy than traditional Christian love must rule human intercourse.

This leads me to the School of Wisdom. The sole purpose of its foundation was to create a centre in which the change of inner attitude, which I think necessary at this crisis, should find its symbolic expression and act as an example radiating afar. The change in question being a dynamic process, and in each case an original and strictly personal process, there could be no question of a program determined once and for all. The newest teaching may be received in the spirit of old prejudices, and the best program but serve to perpetuate antiquated errors. Everything one is wont to call "education" today misses the capital point: it imparts knowledge, but it does not inspire personal understanding; it develops efficiency, but it does not create a higher plane of being. In this respect it is not progressive; it does not differ in principle from the mediæval school where youth was taught simply to explain what was already believed. That this is really so seems to me to be finally proved by the increasing inferiority of the level of the so-called educated masses all over the world: the more they know, the less they understand; the more efficient they are as specialists, the less superior and complete they appear as personalities. The inward change which is necessary in order to evolve a higher state of being—the one thing that really matters—can only be brought about by the stimulation of the creative essence within the individual soul. This, of course, can never be achieved by an "institution" as such, but only by qualified personal influence; nor can it be achieved in all men, but only in such as seem ready for it. On the other hand, in this modern age of ours far-reaching influences cannot be brought to act on

the world at large by the methods employed by the sages of ancient Greece or China or India. Therefore I decided on a compromise. I founded an institution, open in principle to all, with a board of trustees, supporting members, a secretary, an office, lecture rooms, a library and so on. Yet the only purpose of this institution is to keep alive a spirit which is the very opposite of that of any modern institution. It is inimical to any sort of routine. Its aim is just to preserve the originality of the origin, to keep alive the life, to prevent even externally the living personal impulse from becoming a "thing." The method of the School of Wisdom can therefore only be *living improvisation at the right moment*. It aims solely at giving life the necessary new Meaning, this word understood (as I always understand it) as the creative spiritual source of life. And as Meaning is in itself intangible, only to be realized in materializations; as the same Meaning can be embodied in many forms—therefore, in the School of Wisdom, the way and degree and specific quality of the working out of the Meaning of a given subject and the demands of life connected therewith depend entirely on the possibilities of the moment. The School of Wisdom does not give out an abstract teaching which may be learned by heart by everybody, *but it creates symbolic images, it sets examples*. That this is the most effective way to act on life is proved by the fact that the whole of Chinese culture derives from the few recorded talks of Confucius, the whole Buddhist culture from the legends concerning Buddha, and our own Christian culture from the parables contained in the four Gospels. Accordingly, what actually takes place in the School of Wisdom is this: it gives qualified personalities the opportunity for influenc-

ing life, both symbolically and actually; it brings about a fruitful polarization of differentiated spirits; it gives those who already have a glimpse of what is most needed the opportunity of arriving at a realization of the meaning of their own lives and of their special task or purpose in the world. Finally, the School of Wisdom posits objective problems in such a way that by the new adjustment they receive a new significance and find a new solution. It cannot possibly have a definite program like a university or a college, its plane of existence being entirely different. It deals exclusively with the inspirational spring of life.

But this apparent lack of definiteness really means a higher form of definiteness. One cannot really change life by educating what is already grown up; one can do it only by creating young generations of a new kind. And the creative seed as such must bear life in the form of implication, not of explication. The latter follows later as the result of growth. Buddha did not teach a theology of his own; he simply again and again emphasized a few simple truths—and the whole intricate tradition of Buddhist culture was the result. Just so Plato never elaborated what he meant; he was afraid lest his new truth should be misunderstood on the lines of antiquated thought; his one care was to keep the minds of his disciples always on the alert. And the result was not only the body of later Greek philosophy, but to a great extent that of the Christian Church. Just so, the School of Wisdom teaches nothing definite in particular, for that would simply leave it on the level of traditional thought. What is new about it is best illustrated by its motto, "Take from none; give something to each." It does not try to destroy any form of life—and even posi-



tive religion is, in the first instance, a life-form—but it imparts to all of them a new meaning and thus regenerates them from within. As far as this kind of teaching can be expressed in the abstract, it has been laid down in this book and in *The Recovery of Truth*. But the aim of the School of Wisdom is not simply to impart this abstract doctrine—if that had been my intention, the writing of books would have sufficed—its aim is to embody this doctrine in life, to create personalities who represent it. The School deals with vital individual personalities. And it must do so precisely because it means to express universal Truth. For the correlation of the universal on the plane of actual life is not the “general,” but the “unique,” not “Society” or “Mankind,” but every single “Each.” This, by the way, was also the very essence of Christ’s teaching.

All this will have made clear that the School has little resemblance to any other school in the modern world. I may even say that its name was chosen just because of the paradox it contains, for there can be no question of a school in the ordinary sense of the word and wisdom is essentially unteachable. And it has little resemblance to other schools in this point, too, that it is not primarily intended for the young. I have found that very few below the age of thirty really care for the reality of life. The life of the young is a game or a process of growth or of partial education; man becomes conscious of his essence only when he is grown up, and philosophy and wisdom only deal with the ultimate issues of life. But now that I have said all that seems possible to prevent misunderstanding, I will explain in what sense this School *is* a school, nevertheless. Its very nature has evolved typical ways of proceeding, of which there are

six up to now. The first is the personal interview—one talk with the right person in the right relationship and at the right moment has often done more to accelerate a man's development than years of diligent study. The second is a course of exercises (spiritual training), based on ancient, tested methods of self-improvement leading toward the goal of perfection, which are made use of at Darmstadt as a means of embodying the necessary new significance [see *Mysterium der Wandlung* (*Mystery of Transformation*) by Erwin Rousselle, the late leader of the courses. There have been no such courses for several years, for want of the right person to organize them]. The third way of influencing life is embodied in the meetings, or *Tagungen*, held by the Society for Free Philosophy at Darmstadt. These meetings I conduct according to the rules of the art of spiritual orchestration. Various speakers work harmoniously together on the keynote of one underlying theme, like the various instruments in an orchestra. None of the speakers is forced in any special direction which does not entirely conform with his own particular individual way; in the framework of the leading theme he represents only himself. But by the fact that each speaker is drawn into his place like the note in a chord of music, something speaks through him which is above the purely personal or individual: through each individual speaks the Meaning of the Whole. Then again, from the complete chord each note singly derives a new meaning. In this way at least a dawning sense of that deeper consciousness is awakened in the greater part of the hearers, from which alone life can be reconstructed. These meetings naturally, and as it were inevitably, result in the solutions of the problems dealt with in a manner that radiates far and wide; for

the spiritual chord inevitably initiates the process of the development of the Subconscious in the direction of the intended goal. Thus the meeting of 1921 solved the problem of the relationship between eternal significance and the ever-changing appearances of external fact or form; the meeting of 1922 solved the problem of the heroic Western modality of life by showing how one-sidedness can become the symbol of all-sidedness, which implies the annulment of all conflicts arising from one-sidedness, such as race hatreds, anti-Semitism and anti-militarism. The keynote of the meeting of 1923 was the relationship between a general outlook on life and an individual life-construction. On that occasion, a Protestant, a Roman Catholic and a Russian of the orthodox Greek Church, harmoniously co-operating on a higher plane, traced the outlines of Christianity's possible future; the same meeting worked out the prototype of what may emerge from the newly-rising world of labour under favourable conditions, and finally outlined the prototype of "ecumenic man," to whom alone the future will belong. The keynote of the meeting of 1924 was "evolution and dissolution, life and death"; by counterpointing biology, history, psycho-analytical research and religious experience it made clear the true significance of the belief in the Eternal and of the striving toward Immortality. In the same way, the meeting of 1925 gave a new meaning to the idea of freedom, and that of 1927 determined the position of man in the universe from a new and higher standpoint.

The fourth channel of influence of the School of Wisdom is embodied in the *Lehrtagungen*, or Instructive Meetings; their aim is the detailed elaboration of the impulses given by the School; not only the teachers, but

the disciples, too, appear as lecturers. Of this special kind of meeting the first took place in October, 1928; its central theme was based on my American experiences. Lastly, as a fifth channel of influence, the School's annual publication, *Der Leuchter* (*The Beacon*), helps to acquaint those who were unable to attend personally, with the results of the Darmstadt meetings, and the same applies to the bi-annual publication, *Der Weg zur Vollendung* (*The Path toward Perfection*), which deals with the important problems of life, sheds light on books from the standpoint of the School of Wisdom, and is almost like a personal letter from those living at Darmstadt to their circle of friends, thus creating a field of living tradition. I may add, by the way, that all the lectures given at the *Tagungen* and most of the important articles contained in the *Weg zur Vollendung* up to the year 1927 have been reprinted in *The Recovery of Truth*.

My readers may now ask me has the experiment of the School of Wisdom been a success? Whatever others may think of it, the results have been much better and more far-reaching within the first seven years of its activity than I had ever dared to hope. I never expected a large following, because the majority of those who join a movement is more or less of a gregarious nature, whereas I can deal only with independent characters, and such as these never become "disciples"; usually they are impatient of any attempt to influence them. On the other hand, it is altogether against my own inclinations to try to convince or attract anybody. I can only say and write what I think is true; answer questions others ask me of their own free will; put the problem so that everybody who chooses may see it; and keep my reception room open to any serious truth-seeker. The wonderful thing



is that this seems to be exactly what the most serious-minded of people want today. From the very beginning I found as much response as I could desire, and precisely from the most independent-minded of men and women. People come and go from all parts of the world. Few stay more than three days. But to my mind even one hour, rightly employed, should do. A development on the lines of independence can only be started; any further help and guidance would really do harm. But the sphere of activity of the School of Wisdom is not confined to the Darmstadt centre. Of course, its existence is of primary importance. I hope that some day it will become not only a spiritual but also a material power, for only then will it be able to keep as many teachers and do as much for its disciples as it should.<sup>1</sup> But on the other hand, wherever I go, the School of Wisdom goes with me. My lecture tours all over the world are an integral part of its activities. And since I am more and more frequently asked to visit all parts of the world, and since the Darmstadt style is already so well known everywhere that it is almost always possible for me to make a temporary Darmstadt of any place I go to, its real radius is already far greater than the material situation, geographical and otherwise, would imply.

In conclusion I may answer in a few words a question often put to me during my stay in the United States, *viz.*, What application my experiment may have to college education in the United States. To college education as

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<sup>1</sup>Those who are interested in the institution as such should apply for the prospectus to the Secretary of the School of Wisdom, 2 Paradeplatz, Darmstadt. My representative in America is the Baroness de Hueck, Director of the Leigh-Emmerich Lecture Bureau, 11 West 42 Street, New York City.

such it can hardly be applied at all. But I do think that its example can be of value all the same. I have the impression that America believes far too much in education, institutions, programs and the like; it believes too much in measures, not in men. I shall deal at length with this problem in my book, *America Set Free*. It is a fact that all great things in this world have been accomplished by personalities, and not by institutions; by single individuals, and not by collectivities. All the value of a living being depends on its uniqueness-quality. Indeed, it is the uniqueness-quality which distinguishes what is alive from what is lifeless. Take the uniqueness-quality away and only superficial and not really vital forces are left. This is the reason why the quality of a crowd is always inferior to that of any single individual among its members: a crowd has no self, its so-called soul is only the sum or the resulting force of empiric elements; if they are to acquire intrinsic value, they must be ensouled by a spirit—and “spirit” is always unique and personal. Therefore collective ideals must inevitably level downward. I say nothing against the ideals of service and collective welfare. If it is the lowest ideal from the point of view of the spirit, yet it creates the best material *basis* for the spiritual growth. On the other hand, to live for others is the one true way of living for oneself, for spirit is essentially outpouring. Lastly, every man as a unit belongs to a greater whole. But then man is this unit in each case as a unique personality. Just from the social point of view the uniqueness-quality should count first of all, infinitely more than any specialized efficiency. If society were really well organized, then personality as such, not the specialized work it can perform, would be understood as the ulti-

mate social value. On the plane of the spirit—and man is ultimately spiritual—numbers not only do not count, but the mere notion of quantity is devoid of meaning. There, one man is not only always more than two men, he is more than millions of men. Whatever mankind has achieved was the work of personal original minds and souls, who thought for themselves, spoke in their own names, conformed to nobody and nothing. These original minds and souls should be trained and given the opportunity to work as such. Everybody should first of all be taught to become as original and personal as possible. And today this is more necessary than ever before, because of the unequalled importance numbers have acquired in the modern world. For the more material quantity counts, the more real life and its values must retire into the background. And this danger seems to me particularly great in the United States. The general outlook of this country is a curious mixture of eighteenth and twentieth century ideas. (This, too, I have explained at length in *America Set Free*.) Everything belonging to the realm of applied science is more advanced than anywhere else in the world. But on the other hand, America still believes in “abstract man,” man who as such is essentially the same in all cases, all differences being due to education and environment. This idea of abstract man is the foundation of all mistaken ideas of equality, the most pronounced of which is the idea underlying Bolshevism. In reality, there is no such thing as abstract man; man is concrete and unique in every case. The first thing we must do today if we are to progress is to get rid of this most shallow of eighteenth-century prejudices. This is the most important lesson the World War and the World Revolution should

have taught us. Indeed, as long as the uniqueness-quality is not emphasized above all others, as long as normalcy and like-mindedness are considered as ideals, education can only lead to ever-increasing barbarization; for the knowledge and the efficiency a man acquires derive their significance and value exclusively from the original life-force which makes use of them. If there is no such original force, then the best possible external education is often worse than the grossest savagery. For a scientifically trained savage is doubtless a much more dangerous creature than an ignorant savage. And man returns to the state of the savage when his personal soul and spirit remain undeveloped, as it is increasingly the case in modern mass-education.

Whether anything like the School of Wisdom would be possible or useful in the United States, depends on whether there is an individual American who incarnates a similar impulse, or whether there is a foreigner incarnating it who would appeal to Americans, and whether the response he could find would be wide enough to justify the creation of a corresponding institution. But I think that the example set by the School of Wisdom is valid for all planes of existence and all activities. In all respects, "being" is more important than "efficiency"; in all respects, depth of life is more valuable than external riches; in all respects, understanding alone and not exterior knowledge leads to real progress as opposed to success. I, personally, never meant to do more than to create a symbol for meditation. Those who meditate on it in the right way will find out for themselves what they can do. This depends on them, not on me.

HERMANN KEYSERLING.

PART FIRST  
ON THE PERCEPTION OF SIGNIFICANCE





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## *Oriental and Occidental Ways of Thinking as Leading to the "Sense"*

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WHOEVER has mastered many languages is aware—and the greater his perfection of expression in each, the clearer his perception of the fact—that in reality thoughts cannot be translated. The objects and conditions corresponding to the notions may tally ever so accurately; each nation relates its equivalent mental formations to some special system of co-ordinates; and this is one of the reasons why even the concepts of languages nearly related and belonging to the same sphere of civilization very rarely coincide. A person gifted with a very sensitive ear will further discover that even two persons of the same blood and speaking the same language, though saying the same thing, never absolutely mean one and the same thing; every single being is essentially unique—a real monad without windows, inasmuch as in the matter of comprehension there exist no independent external means of communication between him and others. Each man has in mind his own special meaning, which finds expression only in conventional sounds, and these the other for his part understands in his own way. It follows that not-understanding or mis-understanding ought to be the primal social phenomenon. In reality the opposite is the case: the primal phenomenon is understanding. Of course, practically, mis-understanding is more than frequent and probably the rule, where difficult questions are concerned;

yet in principle the above sentence is true, for otherwise spiritual communion could not be a primary phenomenon. And this it is. Just as the unity of the physical organism figures as an *a priori* to its separate parts, the consciousness of a connexion, where it exists, precedes that of its special components; whatever belongs together is conscious of the fact even though external facts in themselves do not provide the proof of its existence. All animals of the same species immediately understand one another; so do all human beings upon the same level. Conversation is only agreeable with one who by mere allusion knows what is meant. And this must be so if communion is to be possible at all, if no object of the visible world is capable of enforcing an impression, that depending entirely on the receptive sense-organ—the same must be the case all the more where intellectual elaboration is in question. An understanding must fundamentally pre-exist if an agreement about details is to be arrived at, if not in reality, then at least as a possibility. These considerations inevitably lead to the result that spirits must be able to communicate in some direct way, beyond and, as it were, in spite of the means of utterance. Of this fact I cannot give the ultimate explanation here. But I also need not give it since it provides the very basis of all epistemology. Indeed, the oldest, the Platonic definition should suffice for our purpose. Plato's teaching was: it is not the eyes that see, but we see by means of the eyes. This is true in a still higher degree of all spiritual means of communication: they themselves do not tell us anything, but other things are revealed to us by them. This is the only explanation of the mysterious fact that highly intuitive minds can almost do without them, and that children grasp the sense of words before

seizing the words themselves. Concepts really are organs. The fact that without our eyes light would not exist for us, but that, on the other hand, although the eye is a creation of the light, the latter is something very different from the former, provides the best analogy to the relation between concepts and their intended meaning.

This analogy even bears enlarging upon and thus takes us back to our original line of thought. It is the same retina which enables us to see and recognize colors and shapes, both known and unknown. This is possible because and only because it is *not* the eye as such which sees; it only establishes a connexion between the visible world and its spiritual and visual apprehension. Just so we can understand new ideas although we know only those we possess; just so, though only knowing our own language, we can get to understand, on the basis of it, a foreign tongue. This, then, should make our definition of understanding as the primal phenomenon quite clear. Understanding can be the primal phenomenon in spite of the circumstance that each can only think his own personal ideas, just as there can be and actually exists a continuity and undividedness of things visible, in spite of the fact that everybody sees for himself. As soon as there are organs of communication, understanding sets in. The only question is, what are the depths to which it reaches down. One may recognize in the words of another person only one's own meaning, or that of the speaker. This never depends on the means of communication as such, it only depends on the person who makes use of them. There are such things as shortsightedness and farsightedness even on the plane of understanding. In any case, we never understand words in themselves, but a meaning they express. That meaning is something fundamentally

different from the expression, even where their correspondence seems to be absolute. One may even go so far as to say: expression in itself can never be the meaning.—If this is so, then the possibility to understand a stranger is nothing more miraculous than the understanding of a relative, even though the former achievement may presuppose more intelligence; if there is at all such a thing as understanding, then even things most strange must be understandable. And so they are.

Proceeding from this possibility of understanding things most strange, I will today treat of the difference between Oriental and Occidental ways of thinking. Not for its own sake, however—the full perception of its significance shall be to us a step towards a higher and more general insight.

TO BEGIN with, I must confess that the task I have set myself does a certain amount of violence to the facts. There may be an Occident clearly to be defined and similar in all essential points—all Asiatics affirm there is, and attribute to the essential similarity of all Europeans the immense power of the West, whereas the experience of the World War has taught us how impossible it is under certain circumstances even for nations most closely related in all respects to do mutual justice to their respective mentalities—but there certainly is no homogeneous Orient. It will never be possible to find a common denominator for the Islamic, the Hindoo and the Chinese essence. The world of Islam is closely related to ours. Having its spiritual foundation in Judaism as we have, it was originally nothing more than a puristic and radical movement within the Byzantine-Christian and Asiatic worlds, most closely re-



lated to and adjoining the former; and since then it has developed in a direction very similar to ours, so that mutual understanding is not difficult even between the far ends of the movements. It is possible to understand the Hindoos without difficulty up to a certain point, if one happens to be mentally a German, and a Russian in soul, and if one's spirituality has been formed by Catholicism—beyond that point even for a European of such an exceptional kind there begins what cannot be mastered by his ordinary means of comprehension. But then the Chinese way of thinking! With educated Chinese, thought normally starts from a plane of consciousness, of which we know nothing. Accustomed as they are never to explain in our fashion what they mean, being used not only to think, but also to write in what one may call algebraic symbols—means of conception, which seize the thoughts in the moment of their birth, as it were—they have not only a faculty of outward combination, but also an inner faculty of settling and finishing the whole mental process in the subconscious, which make our circumstantial means of communication seem unnecessary to them. That instinctive and direct perception of an underlying unity of Significance through the variety of its embodiments, with us characteristic of a rare and exceptional mind, is a faculty natural to every educated Chinese of the old school, for without it the higher degrees of writing and reading cannot be practised in China. To establish an immediate understanding with a Chinese by the help of our accustomed means of communication is impossible, for the simple reason that Chinese thought moves on a different plane of consciousness.

But on the other hand, if one discards the differences sketched, Eastern and Western ways of thinking appear identical in meaning, because both are human ways of thinking; thinking is, in the first instance, a peculiar expression of life, common to all human beings and capable of the same biological interpretation in all cases. This shows that it is very difficult to keep up the distinction marked by the subject of this chapter. It is possible in one connexion only—that of cognition in the philosophical sense of the word. There is one important fact, and one only, which makes it possible to contrast Oriental and Occidental ways of thinking, taking each as a unity and a whole. And it is because of this one fact that I have chosen the subject, which has no other *raison d'être* for us than to lead us beyond itself. It is well known that every Oriental, even the most worldly, seems fundamentally more indifferent to the externals of life than we are; his inner aspirations towards the infinite, for instance, would never outwardly appear in the shape of a desire for spatial expansion. This is true of every native of the Orient, and is probably partly due to climate. But this same circumstance furnishes a characteristic common to all philosophical thought in the East. *While even the most disinterested thinking, in the case of an Occidental, figures as a means towards an end, it appears in the Orient, generally speaking, as an end in itself.* It is a form of life among others. It follows that the results of the thinking done in the East and in the West cannot in principle be compared, and this again implies an impossibility of reciprocal translation. But on the other hand, this very impossibility of comparison reveals the existence of two mental co-ordinates pointing

to the possible existence of some other and deeper centre, the location of which may lead to a deeper understanding of both.

LET us begin by looking a little more closely into the fact of the impossibility to compare the East and the West, and let us consider at the same time the advantages and the shortcomings on both sides. Oriental thought, as far as it does not coincide with ours, generally does not aim at all at the explanation of an object; it gives immediate expression to a Meaning, independent of the outer world. We, on the contrary, whatever the problems be that we attack, aim at the grasping of an object in the objective sense. For this reason even the basic conceptions on both sides cannot possibly harmonize. What, for instance, does truth mean with us and with them? The meaning we modern Westerners involuntarily attach to the word does not appear at all obvious to the true Oriental; and it is impossible that it should, for from his point of view an empiric lie may be the truest expression of the sense. There is no doubt that one can convey to a person of understanding what one means by an apparent untruth, just as well as or even better under certain circumstances than by an exact and correct statement of the case. Women and diplomatists know this well enough in the West, and they act accordingly. But their idea of truth is not the generally accepted one. As soon as we Occidentals consciously put the question, the ideal of truthfulness, fundamentally the same in East and West, appears capable of realization only in the form of material truth, that is to say, in the form of a concordance of the subject and the object. Thus we Westerners even ask the question, which to every Ori-

ental philosopher must appear absurd—whether God has an “objective” existence; and no demonstration of the impossibility of proving the existence of God, no obvious *absurdum* to which the assumed reasonableness of the question leads, has as yet discouraged us of asking it. Just so we are in the habit of asking, to what kind of objects the deepest of spiritual conceptions may correspond (this psychological fact is not altered by definitions of a more rational character, carefully discriminating between metaphysical substance and empiric objects; the point is not what is being defined, but the way in which the definition is being understood). Thought, for the typical Occidental, has no autonomous meaning. Even where such independent meaning is overtly postulated, as in the case of the so-called Philosophy of Identity, ancient and modern, thought does not appear really founded in itself. The great Greek rationalists were regular grammarians; the Meaning they had in mind was so mixed up with the laws of expression that ultimately these decided upon truth. And that for the modern philosophers of Identity thought does not mean something autonomous is proved by the fact that the greatest among them, Hegel, thought of the objective spirit as of something abstract, although he defined it quite accurately as a concrete reality. Were it otherwise, he would never have gone so far as to look upon the Will of the State as the fulfilment of the rational will of the individuals, nor would he have identified the inner life of the spirit with its external way of proceeding, the dialectical way; nor would he ever have thought of identifying formal logic with the way of metaphysical evolution. He would, eventually, never have generalized in the reckless way he did. Intellectual generaliza-



tions are only results of a process of abstraction within the phenomenal world, whereas Hegel's *Konkrete Allgemeines* (an untranslatable word meaning a concrete general entity), which really does exist, can never be seized by generalizing within that world, but only by diving more deeply into its Meaning.

Now to the Hindoos, thought really and in the first instance means an independent power; it is not a means of gaining knowledge of reality, but it is the immediate expression of a spiritual reality. And this idea does really correspond to one of its sides. *Every thought is significant in two senses: on the one hand as the intellectual correspondent of an external object; on the other as the means of expression of an independent and autonomous meaning.* And this is actually true of every thought, for in every case its meaning may be considered independently of what does or does not correspond to it in the external world.—Well, for the Oriental, thought has this inner and absolutely independent meaning, and nothing but that, as far as his way of thinking is to be contrasted with ours. This explains the fact, otherwise so strange, that Hindoo thought, as it penetrates deeper, uses an ever greater number and an ever increasing variety of expressions, instead of managing with ever fewer notions. That is so because it is not dealing with abstractions, but with independent spiritual substances, thoroughly concrete in their own way. Obviously there must be found ever more and different kinds of these, the deeper the exploration of their sphere of living reaches, just as external nature appears ever richer and more varied as it becomes better known. And if in the end this way of thinking does result in an apparent unification and simplification, as in the case of the Hindoo



notion of the Atman or the Chinese of Tao, this does not mean anything of the kind of a summary or a general denominator in the abstract sense, it points to the deepest of realities, which concretely underlies (or is supposed to underlie) all varieties of appearance.

Viewed in this connexion, Eastern and Western ways of thinking seem diametrically opposed. And this one connexion, certainly only comprising a limited sphere, is so eminently characteristic of both, that it determines the whole tone of life in both cases to a high degree. And that makes it possible to judge the value of the two lines and directions of thought in a more definite way. Wherever thought in our Western sense of the word is in question, the Orientals are inferior to us. To them thoughts are independent forms of life of essentially symbolic significance, and for that reason they cannot be brought into a perfect and satisfactory relation with the outer world. Since they never do entirely and exclusively conform to the latter, there can be no Oriental science in the proper sense (many as are the Orientals excelling in the acquired Western sciences). Truthfulness in the sense of truth relative to the object, they do not know; cunning more than exactness is their ideal of practical thought. Their attitude towards the external world is typically feminine; their intellect is their Foreign Office as it were; astuteness takes the place of methodical proceedings. Their "science" means magic art, whatever it pretends to be; nature is not really to be comprehended in its essence and thus mastered, it is simply to be conquered. But on the other hand, we Westerners as typically fail in the sphere of metaphysics. As we stated before, Occidental thought is fundamentally a *means* of cognition, not an independent process,

expressive of a spiritual reality. This is why the Occidental involuntarily feels helpless wherever such immediate expression is in question. The Greek betrayed his understanding of essential truth to grammar, the mediæval Christian to what was then called scholasticism; Kant never proceeded beyond the frontier of metaphysics, highly suspicious of what might lie beyond; Fichte, Schelling and Hegel had an intuitive knowledge of metaphysical reality, but, true to their Occidentalism, they misinterpreted it as a province of the intellectual field. Nor is Bergson a true metaphysician; the clearer understanding he has gained of the limitations of the intellect was the result in his case, as in that of Kant, of his wonderful intellectual endowment. The intuition he demands, Bergson himself possesses only in a slight degree; as far as I can judge, it is equal to only a certain part of natural (as opposed to cultural) phenomena. It is typical of the West that its poets are profounder than its philosophers, even where these must be recognized as being deep. Poets under every circumstance give immediate expression to the powers which sway them, whereas it is typical that our philosophers penetrate to the inside from without and thus are not able to give immediate expression to things inward. The metaphysical reality is something essentially and purely inward, to be understood from within only. The West has never quite clearly been aware of this. Hence its "idealism" as a substitute for metaphysics, where another sort of phenomena—a world of constructed ideas, that is to say, something as external as nature from the metaphysical point of view—is supposed to be the basis of all phenomena, a misunderstanding only possible to one who originally has no conscious notion of things metaphysical.

What is it that underlies nature? To this question there is as yet no positive answer. In the sphere of things living nature is ultimately an expression of life—of the primal metaphysical principle, which may be described as a Sense-connexion, making of "Sense" the last instance of thought. And indeed, according to our ideas the only instance beyond the phenomena is their possible Significance; for everything that is not Significance may in principle be looked upon as phenomena. And Significance as "Sense" really is the creative basis of all living and in a yet higher degree of all spiritual phenomena; it is an independent but purely spiritual reality, not contained in the phenomena as such. Just as the meaning of a thought does not live in the sentences, words and letters as such which serve to express it, just so no other "Sense" ever coincides with its expression; "life" does not coincide with the body, nor the knowledge of the sage with the doctrine by means of which he tries to impart it. At the beginning of this lecture we have already seen that what is meant and what is said can never be one and the same thing. Up to now this has never been understood by the West. It is typical that even where the West has expressly aimed at Sense-apprehension, it has penetrated to the inside from without, that is to say, the wrong way about. It has attributed to the phenomena a Sense from without and has not discerned the Sense existing within them. That is so in the case of the interpretation of the Bible by Philo, as well as by Rudolf Steiner, it is not only part of the superficiality, but it is also part of the violence of the Occidental character to decree what "should" be, instead of understanding what there is. The former practice is fit for a soldier, but not

for the metaphysician, which is the chief reason why the type of the latter thrives better in the East.

IN THE East and in the West thought means something typically different, being an immediate expression of spiritual reality there, whereas with us it is a means of mastering the outer world.—I need not enter into our own way of thinking. It is necessary, however, to consider more closely that of the East, for the Western mentality does not readily understand that this, too, may lead to the recognition of truth. The West has an idea that spiritual reality according to Eastern notions is essentially a creation of the imagination—that is to say, a world originating from and projected by man, and not a deeper world of which he himself is only an expression.

That most of the assertions of the Orient concerning things transcendent belong to the realms of fancy, if not to those of phantasmagoria, cannot be denied. But it is quite wrong to take the assertions in question literally; though knowing nothing of epistemology, the Orient itself is conscious of the fact by instinct, or at least it has its suspicions about it; otherwise it would not accept contradicting theories and dogmas as true, or gods of opposite characters as identical. With all phenomena created by metaphysical consciousness it is not a question of ultimate facts, but of symbols; their Significance is the all-important thing, and it is the Significance, not the phenomenon, which represents the last instance—*i.e.*, the essence of the thing. At the beginning of my *Travel Diary* I wrote that the metaphysician is to the poet what the poet is to the actor. "The comedian presents, the poet creates, the metaphysician anticipates in his mind every possible representation and creation." In the



light of our investigation this sentence will probably be better understood than it has been up to now. The "Sense," the *Lógos spermatikós* of an actor's creation, lies in the part he plays; that of the poet's in his own nature; to the metaphysician this and all its creations are but the means of expression for something deeper. It is this "something deeper" only which he means. Thus the character of the metaphysician is on a line with that of the poet and not of the man of science, but it is nearer to the creative origin of all things. That is why he means something different, even when saying the same thing as the poet. He means *essential* truth. And it should not be urged here that by his imaginations the poet too represents truth, this being his real vocation; he certainly does so, only instead of laying the emphasis on Significance, he lays it on its outward expression—and where Sense-connexions are in question, the point that bears the emphasis is all-important. In this emphasis lies the centre of the life in question. If it makes all the difference in the sphere of physical reality whether the brain or the spinal marrow is the ruling power, it is all the more so in the sphere of spiritual reality. The poet very rarely understands the profound things he has said; the metaphysician does, and this implies a difference in the quality of consciousness. Of the two the metaphysician is the profounder, for if symbols are images of the Sense, then in the Sense lies their creative source; and the man who is not conscious of this must to that extent be called superficial. There would be less misunderstanding if it were more clearly recognized that "being human" and "being conscious" are convertible terms, and that from this point of view only can there be a question of valuation. As far as gradations of



value from the animal to the god are possible, they must be measured by the progressive deepening and expanding of consciousness.

We will now return to the problem of Eastern thought. The Oriental way of thinking is symbolical, inasmuch as it expresses the inner reality of the phenomena without consideration of their external reality; the creative Sense of the symbol lies within the thinker himself. At this point there arises the decisive question, how far can we speak of a reality, where such a "Sense" is concerned? Let us begin by considering mythology, the realm which seems farthest from all reality. Men of research have long been struck by the similarity of the myths of all nations and all times. At first external reasons were given for the fact; reminiscences of the principal stages of natural evolution, the course of which has been the same everywhere, were believed to account for their similarity. Later it has been scientifically established that there is an *inner* reason for this similarity: myths are symbolic expressions of the most fundamental and most ancient subconscious psychic processes; these are common to all human beings; they have been ever and ever recurring for thousands and thousands of years and are therefore fixed and definitely outlined in the hereditary substance, so much so that the ravings of an insane negro present a caricature of Greek myth.<sup>1</sup> This is the reason why those ancient symbols carry conviction to all who go deeply into them, for they appeal to something vital in everyone, just as the written expression of a well-known idea naturally calls forth the idea itself in the mind. Symbols further serve as real organs for

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<sup>1</sup> See Dr. C. G. Jung's *Psychological Types*, also his *Psychology of the Unconscious*.

the perception of psychological and metaphysical connexions, just as the eye is the organ for the reception of light; for only by means of certain symbols, the special character of which is not an arbitrary construction, do we get into conscious touch with the inner reality corresponding to them. That is why all systems of self-development make use of the most ancient symbols for the sake of attaining their end; these are organically fitted for the realization of the Sense corresponding to them.

Under these circumstances even the most fantastic of myths are expressions of an inner reality. It is another question, of course, whether their reality may be called profound in a given case; very often it lies more at the surface than the normal world of thoughts, as is the case with most of our dreams, the greater number of which only have a physiological *raison d'être*. But in any case there is always an underlying reality. It is altogether impossible to invent anything that does not originate from an existing depth of the soul, and no invention carries conviction which does not meet with the response of immediate understanding there.

Only one step more on the same line and we are led to recognize that Significance has a reality of its own, independent of its embodiment on the plane of names and forms. Modern analytical psychology has in fact taken that step, though not with conscious understanding of the case. Since Freud first became aware of the fact that dreams, omissions, actions and diseases are not to be considered as last resorts and that they can only be understood by reason of what they express, the science created by him has come to relate all facts to Sense-connexions, so that today the spiritual aims of a person

are inquired into in order to understand aright the facts of his life. Under these circumstances there doubtless is an ultimate spiritual reality, of which nature is only the expression, whatever that reality's final significance may be. To that extent, the Oriental notion of thought doubtless relates to something real. Now this reality can only be defined *in abstracto* as Meaning, as Sense, as Significance. Every symbol as such is a material thing, to whatever plane of matter it may belong; for sounds, words, notions and ideas, viewed as formations, are phenomena in exactly the same sense as solid bodies. But Significance in itself cannot be understood within the frame of any empirical category; Significance alone is what we must call spiritual. This is true of the meaning of a thought in contradistinction to its embodiment, of the Significance of a dream, of a myth, of a work of art in contradistinction to its actual facts. This "Significance" is demonstrably the creator of its expressions. It follows that the Oriental notion of thought as an independent and autonomous power is well founded in principle as well as in fact.

OF COURSE, what we have said here cannot as yet be considered as proved. But it is part of the arrangement of this book that its *Leitmotiv* should be struck from the very beginning. The reader should therefore not look out here for arguments and proofs which will be given later; for the present he should simply try to follow the general rhythm of what I have to say. He will not regret having done so.

There does, in fact, exist a world which is purely spiritual and yet real. There exists an independent and autonomous spiritual life, which does not merely work

with abstractions from the external world as the nineteenth century's science imagined, but progressively expresses its own reality by means of phenomena. Just as the inventor starts from an invisible plan, which he gradually materializes, just so "Sense" is everywhere underlying spiritual life as its innermost reality. In itself "Sense" is completely intangible; it becomes real in the empiric sense by expressing itself; the expression embraces its entire empiric reality. But on the other hand, this latter can only be understood when considered as a means of expression, when its meaning is read like that of alphabetical writing. And we do, in fact, read the meaning of the phenomena in this way, wherever we seize their spirit, be it that we study a book, or listen to a lecture, or enjoy musical, poetical or plastic works of art; we do so even when appreciating a technical invention. Everywhere the Sense appears as the real creator of the phenomena. Understanding never means anything else but establishing a vital relationship to it; we are thus confirmed in what we said at the beginning, namely, that what we mean and what we say can in principle not be one and the same thing, and that there must exist a direct communication from spirit to spirit.

This then leads us to the most important conclusion at present within our reach: spiritual Sense-reality manifests itself not only in the creations of conscious spirit, but in the creation of everything that is alive. It is not only the great painter of souls like Rembrandt who uses the features of a face as a means of expressing something deeper; the living flesh itself becomes spiritualized in proportion to the inner growth of its bearer; so that even the physical phenomena of life are not there like dead bodies—they have a Significance beyond

themselves; at any rate, they may have one. As this Significance is a purely spiritual reality, altogether incomprehensible as matter, it follows that the importance of Significance as opposed to fact must grow in proportion to the degree of spirit expressed by an appearance. In the case of creations of the spirit this is evident: a truly important book is something almost purely spiritual; the subject-matter in it is about as important as it is in alphabetical writing. But the same is true where human beings are concerned. Involuntarily we consider the mere facts in the life of a truly important person as unimportant and think only of what is expressed by them—every trait, every experience seems symbolical. This implies that there really is a spirit which one might call "objective," and that the Eastern idea of what thought means is correct as far as it goes; the East is evidently right in its conception of metaphysical reality. But now also we can fully understand why the East appears so lacking in exactness. Since according to its ideas all phenomena are symbols, it has no conscience with regard to them. They are mere expressions. Taken as such, "real" experiences are of no greater scientific value than dreams, so that it seems quite admissible to mix up earthly records with celestial myths. Whoever has carefully observed his dreams will know how easily one form changes into another, how naturally the most heterogeneous things can seem to express an identical meaning. The Hindoo appraises all phenomena as we appraise dreams. He does not take them seriously. To him the Sense alone deserves consideration. But as the Sense as such is inexpressible and the phenomena are of a protean changefulness, the Hindoo ever wavers be-



tween a tendency to retreat from the whole world of formations and a confusion of formations amid which the European feels lost in dismay.

THERE are thus two different ways of looking at and dealing with thought, both of which are justifiable in principle: on the one hand thought really is a means of mastering the outer world; on the other it really is an original form of life. Within their own sphere both Oriental and Occidental ways of thinking lead to truth. Knowledge in the scientific sense of the word can only be attained by means of the latter, whereas the former alone, as a type, leads to metaphysical realization. I do not intend to examine here how far each has attained its end up to now. That they should have even to a limited extent seems out of the question, for the one reason that evidently both ways of thinking are parts of one Life, since both are used by beings doubtless essentially similar, for which reason they should complete each other, and that as yet there is no trace of such a completion in history; on the contrary, it is asserted on both sides that only one leads to truth. Grave mistakes committed on both sides up to now are evident. The Orient itself has long since recognized how much it is in need of scientific criticism: in its own way of thinking it has as yet never got beyond mythologizing, and it finds it all the more difficult to get beyond that stage, because, if science already finds it difficult to determine the true relationship of things which obviously belong to the external world, the distinguishing of spiritual expressions true to their real meaning from arbitrary inventions *within* the conscious makes demands upon exactitude which are

exceedingly hard to realize at all. Here no external means are available to help; the seer of the spiritual has nothing independent of his own imagination to direct him, for whatever he conceives is taking place within his own spirit and soul. This is the reason why nearly all the theories of the East and most of its intellectual explanations are wrong. And as a comprehension of spiritual reality in the form of scientific concepts can only be reached by thought conceived as a means of cognition, it follows *a priori* and is, moreover, an indubitable fact, that the East has never understood its own depth in our sense of the word "understanding." So far the East has never got beyond the state of the poet, of the poet who reveals more than he understands. This is one of the many reasons why the wisdom of the East cannot on any account be looked upon as the final word of human wisdom. But on the other hand we modern Occidentals have so utterly lost touch with the inner reality, that where the metaphysical is concerned our critical superiority simply means blindness.

This then allows us to state the problem, which the future will have to solve in a final form; and it is only for the sake of this statement that I have devoted so much space to consideration of the difference between the East and the West: *if mankind wishes to attain to a higher stage of insight, it must get beyond both the East and the West.* And we for our part should neither Orientalize nor be content with the inherited direction and trend of Occidental spiritual life—something entirely new must come to life. Both ways of thinking are parts of one single vital whole; in this whole resides the ultimate meaning of both. *This ultimate meaning*

*ought to become from now on the basic premise of all future thought.*

Humanity must get beyond both the East and the West. They cannot be fused, because Western and Eastern ways of thinking are last resorts within their own spheres, just as any living metaphysician or any utilitarian is a last resort within his. They are both one-sided; life as a whole in either case only partially expresses itself. From a quantitative point of view the value of both types of man may be the same, but not from a qualitative point of view. There is no doubt whatsoever that whoever is metaphysically conscious is absolutely superior in worth to the most gifted prospector. But by what standard can the difference in quality be measured? *It can be measured by the way in which each particular activity is adjusted to the universal whole.* Everyone must eat, but whoever makes eating his aim in life is inferior to a spiritual person, because the emphasis is laid on the wrong spot. To strive for gain and profit is necessary; but whoever looks upon material advantage as the true meaning of life misunderstands it, and his misunderstanding leads to the growth of an inferior sort of personality. This is not a theoretical assertion; it is proved to be true by all the experience humanity has had. The case of Oriental *versus* Occidental ways of thinking is similar to the extent that each of them pretends to realize completely the meaning of thought as such. Our Western thought-life is not altogether what it should be, because thought as a means towards an end is employed where it should not be; nor is the Eastern way of thinking, as it knows only symbolical expressions, a fact which prevents it from mastering the outer world, which is also a legiti-

mate scope of thought. But both ways are organically connected and interrelated. There is an ultimate synthesis of life; it is that of understanding man, who has the possibility of both ways within himself. The connexion between the two is a necessary one, since each from a certain point of view does justice to reality; again, a knowledge of both ways is necessary in order to comprehend the totality of the world.

Under these circumstances the task of getting beyond the East and the West is evidently this: *to ascertain what is the exact connexion between both directions and attitudes, and then to make this connexion the new starting-point of thinking.*

And we are now in a position to define this connexion with exactitude. Life is the metaphysical principle within us; it realizes itself by expressing itself in the form of phenomena. All means of expression without exception belong to the sphere of nature, and they obey nature's laws. Well, the whole Western way of thinking belongs entirely to nature in this sense of the word. It never leads to metaphysical regions, because it exhausts all its possibilities within the phenomenal world. It really only aims at this and cannot reasonably aim at anything else. As opposed to this, Eastern thought gives symbolical expression to nothing but the metaphysical basis of all phenomena and bears no relation whatever to the outer world.

Under these circumstances the connexion we wished to establish between the two ways of thinking can be no other than this: *the relationship between Western and Eastern thought is the same as that between empiric and metaphysical life.* And this again leads us to the method by which we can get beyond the one-sidednesses

of the East and of the West; the two ways of thinking do not only, in fact, bear the same relation to each other as empiric and metaphysical life; *they must consciously be interrelated in that way. Our Occidental spiritual body, properly adjusted and perfectly developed, would be the very body required for the best possible expression of that very spiritual reality which in itself and as such has been recognized only by the East.*

To put it differently: the truths of the East bear to truths we call scientific the same relationship as do Sense-connexions to grammatical connexions, for the world of natural laws may well be called the grammar of reality. And now we can understand the ultimate import of the knowledge we have gained concerning the Eastern and Western variety of thought. The reason why the wisdom of the East has never been exact, and our science has always been superficial up to a certain point, is that the East, intent upon the Sense alone, took no heed of the laws of expression and thus nearly always represented essential truth in the garb of actual error; whereas the West has never as yet brought its knowledge, correct enough in its own sphere, into the right relationship with the living Sense which underlies that sphere. Kant understood that the last possible premise of all objective cognition is the thinking subject itself. Indeed, in the relationship to this subject lies the basic significance of all objective cognition. Looked at from the point of view of the Spirit, one single Sense-connexion is the vital basis of the whole of nature. What humanity failed to achieve so far was the comprehension of Sense-reality *within* the framework of correct grammatical articulation. This methodical step beyond Kant



must be made now. It is to my mind the most vitally important task our age can have. And when that step is taken, it becomes clear that the spirituality which was typical up to now only of the Orient, and which the West has not yet known how to reach, is the predestined soul of our intellectuality. If the latter often appeared soulless, as it were, there was a good reason for it. Since the beginning of the scientific era, however paradoxical that may sound, our soul has lived itself out in a specialized and remote domain: that of positive religion as the realm of faith in contradistinction to knowledge; the life of the soul had become an eccentric phenomenon within the totality of life. That state of things was obviously an unhealthy and unsound one. It cannot possibly be wholesome to misapprehend the centre of life as an eccentric matter of secondary importance; it must needs lead to superficiality and demoralization. But on the other hand, a return to the intellectual blindness which made possible the idea of the mediæval cosmos would mean a fatal reaction. There is, in fact, only one way open to us, and that is, *to develop what is scientifically true into an expression of spiritual truth.*

This is obviously the great task of the new era in history which has just begun. From now on the problem of the soul can be envisaged quite differently, more seriously, one might even say more positively, than ever before. And thus we have finally got beyond the problem of both the East and the West. The real, the decisive problem is this: the life of mental man, as far as it belongs to the sphere of nature, must become related to the "Sense" that animates it, on all planes and in all respects. Then, what up to now was known to

the world only in the form of two types existing one to the exclusion of the other, will have become one single organism.

CAN this end practically be attained?—It can, because the world of Significance is an organic whole in the same sense as the body is an organic whole. Every cell has its meaningful place within the organ it belongs to; the same is true of the latter within the organism and of the organism itself within the larger wholes in the realm of space and time.<sup>1</sup> Thus every meaningful activity bears reference to a deeper layer of Sense. In him who fully accomplishes his personal task in life, not only what he does and suffers bears a meaningful relationship to a higher unity—*i.e.*, that of personal destiny: this personal destiny in its turn is a symbol, and as such a means of expression of a deeper Sense-connexion, national, temporal, historical, human and ultimately perhaps of a Divine Dispensation. This Sense-connexion seems to have no limits as to possible width and depth. Contemplated from without and yet in reference to its meaning, as it is by the Orient, the world appears as a tangle of symbols; and it appears as the most improbable of myths precisely in its present state of exact scientific description. No wonder, therefore, that profound minds like Rudolf Kassner and Oswald Spengler should take up the ancient idea of a universal science of physiognomy. Can it be that the whole process of the world should have something like an inside? I do not know. Life certainly has in all its aspects and manifestations such an inside. The phenomena are not

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<sup>1</sup> See the last two chapters of my *Immortality* (1922).

simply there like dead bodies; they invariably have a meaning.<sup>2</sup> Facts can be understood only in function of their meaning. This, then, leads us to postulate a new philosophy; a new philosophy which should bring the antagonism of the East and the West to a peaceful end. It is only its location on the mental plane which distinguishes it from those we are familiar with. It starts from a deeper plane of spiritual being. Kant's philosophy made clear the meaning of experience in its relationship to thinking man. But Kant's way of positing the problem is not the final one. What we think, live and do is in itself an expression of meaning and belongs to deeper connexions, not yet exactly understood, but doubtless just as comprehensible in principle as are the more superficial connexions. In the sphere of religion, too, the myth will not remain the final word. In my *Travel Diary* I have already shown how, when rooted on a deeper plane of consciousness, it is possible to arrive at immediate comprehension of the meaning of the various religions, mentalities, civilizations, languages and so on, which means that one can see through these phenomena. I have thus shown that what was previously known as the final word of philosophy and religion can be understood as expressions of something deeper.

What was done thus, for once, in a poetical form, should now become the practice of all. There is no other way of progress in recognition. But on the other hand this one way is open to all who are sufficiently

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<sup>2</sup> While reading the proof-sheets of this book I got hold of Ludwig Klages' foundation of the science of expression, *Ausdrucksbewegung und Gestaltungskraft*. I warmly recommend this truly fundamental work as a completion of my own.

gifted. That it is so is best illustrated by the image of the four Stories of Language which I am in the habit of using in my teaching. The words in a sentence mean, in the first instance, exactly what they are worth as small coin, that is to say, what can be objectively ascertained by means of the dictionary. In the second place, they mean what a certain person says when making use of them. But what he says need not render his exact meaning, for very few are masters of expression; by this we have reached a third story of possible meaning. Only the fourth would be that of true understanding, where the meaning intended by the speaker coincides with the essential Significance of the connexion in question. Every person of understanding unconsciously ascends to and descends from the first three stories many times a day. Henceforth we should do this consciously; and our foremost object should be to make the fourth story our spiritual home. As it is built on the top of the others, as a familiar staircase immediately leads up to it and no new means of ascent are required, the end is attainable. It is possible to understand the ultimate meaning in as direct a way as the visible world is seized by the eye. Now this ultimate Sense has no literal definiteness whatever; it belongs to the Arupa-plane of the Hindoos. But all formations derive their essential meaning from it. If we now learn to live so deeply within ourselves as to perceive *this* Sense as the soul of all phenomena, we will be able to see through all nature as well as through every myth. Then the symbols will no longer appear as surface-constructions, as are most of the traditional myths; they will become adequate images of the deepest Sense. When we shall have reached this

plane of consciousness, we shall have got organically beyond all errors of appearance.

That brings us back to the problem of understanding what is of a nature different from one's own. I must repeat that the present sketchy investigation has as yet not solved one of the problems in the sense of an intellectual demonstration of the truth; it was not intended that it should; this chapter was only meant to strike the *Leitmotive* of the book in the proper rhythm. We have to close with results, that will be proved as correct only later on. The most important are these: the phenomena are only the alphabet of the world. Just as the inventor proceeds from an invisible plan, which he gradually materializes, so spiritual potencies and principles are the basis of life everywhere. They cannot be seized from without. No alphabetical writing as such contains its inner meaning. But whoever has succeeded in diving into the Sense "in itself" will discover that all spiritual spheres are in touch with one another, just as all outer phenomena are connected in some way. That is why people must be *en rapport* if they are to understand one another; that is why such inner connexion, on the other hand, suffices to establish understanding where every outward possibility of understanding seems to be missing. Sense-comprehension is a primary phenomenon, an *a priori*, entirely independent of the means it employs. In principle it is not a question of "how am I to understand?" but of "how deeply do I understand?" the world. Every Sense-connexion bears reference to deeper ones. There is no limit to that. That reveals to us an outlook, which I can only hint at here. Metaphysical understanding really only means a deeper comprehension of the same facts open to empirical understanding.



The world of religious Significance is not another world; it is only a deeper spiritual world. Now the question arises, how do I arrive at a deeper understanding? There is but one way: to change the plane of consciousness. The deeper one penetrates into oneself, thus coming into contact with ever deeper Sense-connexions, animated in their turn by ever profounder vital forces, the wider becomes the range of the world one comes into spiritual contact with. Whoever could penetrate into his innermost depth would at the same time see through the whole of empiric reality. He would be far beyond the Orient and the Occident, beyond the difference between metaphysical and empiric reality; one connexion centred within himself would embrace for him the universe. Whoever could arrive at that state would have attained what is called Divine Omniscience.

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## *Meaning and Expression in Art and Life*

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IN THE preceding lecture I envisaged the problem of the difference between Oriental and Occidental ways of thinking only as a means of arriving at something deeper; I shall proceed in the same manner this time. Art-criticism is not in any way my purpose. That is why I am not ashamed of possible errors about details. I am putting the question as a metaphysician; empiric mistakes of mine will therefore not prevent anybody capable of understanding from perceiving in spite of them my true meaning. Indeed, only the metaphysician can succeed in surveying art and life from one point of view, as we intend to do here. To him, however, both appear necessarily situated on one plane. Both art and life, defined as abstracts, are meaning on the one hand, expression on the other. Technically speaking, both are materializations of spirit. Now, what must be considered as material, and what as spiritual? What, ultimately, *is* the spiritual? In order to answer these questions, I shall begin by entering upon the plane of art. We are not altogether without an answer since the preceding chapter; this is to give a more exhaustive one.

A SHORT historical survey, quite sketchy, without any pretensions to exactitude and of a purely symbolical purport shall serve as an introduction.—During a part of the nineteenth century the classic period in Germany was followed by that of the so-called ideal-

istic conception of art, well known to everybody by Goethe's observations on the subject. According to this conception, plastic art was to represent an abstract ideal as such; the artistic expression was, therefore, to represent subjects which colours and forms did not immediately embody. The latter were to illustrate more than to express; so that allegory was not considered as a symbol misunderstood, but as an ideal. This was the way in which the painters of those times painted; I need only refer to the brothers Cornelius, the Classicists, and more especially to the so-called "Nazarenes" as religious painters. And the same spirit also pervaded the life of those days. The conception of life prevailing at that period was actually in perfect correspondence with its conception of art: life, it was opined, was only a means of realizing established ideals, universally recognized as such—that is to say, it was a means of representing an abstract spiritual content by other means of expression than its own language.

What could sound more convincing than that all activity in the sphere of phenomena should have the one significance of realizing ideals? But to the surprise of many the effect of this idealism was not good; it proved equally bad in the spheres of art and life. To us moderns the life of that period seems strangely lifeless, and its art inartistic to a still higher degree. The wholeness of man's creative powers did not reveal itself in any typical expression of that idealistic age. There were talents to be found then, as there always were and are, but they created nothing of lasting value. Why not? Precisely because they *were idealists*. Idealism as such is no guaranty of spiritual value. The latter depends entirely on what idealism expresses.

The epoch in question was not benefited by its idealism, *because that idealism was wrong in itself*. It is a characteristic of the idealist, understood as the peculiar historical type we are dealing with here, that the starting-point of his creations is not his own being, but an abstracted world of ideas; he does not think, work and act directly from within, but indirectly from a plane of objectifications upon which he projects his ideas as upon a screen. His life is split up against it in the same way as a ray of light meeting an inclined plane is split up. A person may be ever so gifted—under these circumstances he cannot express his own true being. He lives, thinks and acts according to presupposed concepts and ideas, serving their logic, as the law officer serves the code; they may appear more or less vital according to the vitality of him who uses them; but they can never be substitutes for life. In any case his spiritual life will appear as a derivative as opposed to a direct expression. And this has been the fate even of the greatest. In his old age Goethe succumbed to it ever more and more, the less he allowed the tremendous wellspring of life within him to pierce the carefully erected dams; it proved fatal to Fichte and Hegel; it robbed all the artists of that age of immortality. The premise of the idealist is therefore wrong, and errors of thought are proved to be more dangerous to life than most are inclined to believe.

A few generations later the fact, if not its significance, had become clear to all. A revolt against all idealism set in; a revolt which ultimately resulted in the idea that only the empiric data of life as such should be of value and that there existed no purely spiritual values whatever.

In the sphere of plastic art this idea brought about the reign of naturalism and impressionism, the predominance of pure description and self-interpretation in poetry, and the supremacy of the theory of Living-oneself-out, of immoralism and of egotism in world-philosophy. When gauged by the fruit it bore, this idea proved more successful than the preceding, however great the moral objections it gave rise to. Thanks to it, painting was brought to a wonderful climax, the literary species of the novel reached perfection, psychology was discovered as a science and an art; it made for adventurous but rich lives, and rising beyond itself it ultimately culminated in the philosophy of Nietzsche.

But this period had no conscious contact whatever with the spiritual as such; in this respect it was even poorer than the idealistic period had been, although the latter had only been capable of seeing the reflection of its light. After a time, this fact, without being in the least understood, resulted in a feeling of emptiness, which, once it was born, grew ever stronger and more important. In every possible sphere more and more individuals became aware of the fact that the living-out of the forces of nature pure and simple was not yet the life they really wished for. This feeling resulted in the longing for a something the conception of which was foreign to both the naturalistic and the idealistic period, and could not but be foreign to them, since the corresponding metaphysical premise did not consciously exist for either of them: *the longing for self-realization*. Its expression was the new expressionistic movement, which is irresistibly permeating all spheres of art and life ever since. When I say "the expressionistic movement," I am not thinking of its extreme eccentricity-



ties to which the name is generally applied; I am thinking of the general tendency as opposed to naturalism. It is characterized by the endeavour to interiorize and then to create and to live purely from within, fundamentally independently of all outward facts and events, instead of entering into nature and living a life entirely within its limits. Expressionism proceeds from the idea that there is something deeper than both nature and what the intellect is capable of comprehending as an ideal. Today one may say that the ferment which it represents has already leavened the whole world. Today it is a generally accepted fact—be the reason true understanding, blind belief or mere fashion—that beyond man's nature and also beyond man's ideals there is at bottom an ultimate spiritual reality; and that only he who embodies this reality in the facts of his life is true to the inmost meaning of his will to expression in both art and life. Thus this new period converges, in its profoundest representatives, with the aims which in Europe last swayed the Middle Ages.

**B**UT if we now survey this process from a superior point of view, we become aware that as yet it is far from its goal and that it is for the moment evidently going astray. The expressionistic type is no doubt superior to its predecessors in many respects, as the naturalistic was in other respects superior to the idealistic; since it places movement before rest and judges the essence by the effect it produces, its consciousness has doubtless got into closer contact with the meaning of life; then it lives from a deeper plane of consciousness; finally its subjective and objective hori-

zon is more extensive; it experiences itself as an integral part of the universe. But where the task should obviously be to build up afresh on deeper foundations a life which has become superficial, what actually takes place is a process of demolition; the will to reconstruct sets in only after destruction has taken its course. This is why, wherever routine does not favor the illusion that the old order of things still continues, there is chaos in art and life, a chaos which not only resembles the aboriginal state, but actually means a relapse into the primitive. In politics, ideals which really correspond to the group-consciousness of primitive man are being considered progressive, art is becoming negroid and cryptographical, dadaism recalls primeval magic speech, and on the plane of religion and philosophy all those formations are returning which the last decades and centuries thought discarded as mere superstitions.

These times do really recall the first centuries after Christ more than any have done since then. Just as the state-bankruptcy created conditions in the West Roman Empire which were similar to those we are witnessing in Russia, just so modern Europe is swarming with founders of religion, magicians and saviours, as did the land about the Mediterranean in those early days. Each one finds crowds of blindly believing followers, if only he shows an air of conviction. In spite of all their resistance the real sages and saints are lifted onto pedestals, which is a fatal thing when it happens to anyone before he is dead. Every epidemic belief in miracles soon becomes endemic; all that remains of the period of predominating natural science is that every religious movement wears the scientific mask. The

greater number of spiritists, theosophists and anthroposophists, considered as types, belong to that ancestral type.

It cannot be denied that the primitive actually is the exponent of a deeper consciousness of reality than are all intellectualistic and naturalistic constructions. It is a question of superstructures here, whereas there the foundations are concerned. Primitive art is pregnant with the depths of nature. But it does not express a *spiritual* consciousness, and if man really is something more than a plant or an animal, then the degree of conscious spirituality provides the standard of value. For in all other respects plants and animals are not less endowed and very often are even more perfectly developed. That is why a return to nature never means progress; it may be inevitable at times, even propitious; so are many children's diseases; as far as it brings about rejuvenation, it may even mean salvation—but as such it does not lead on to higher goals. When Rousseau sounded the death-knell to the culture he had been born into, many may have imagined that the higher thing they longed for would be realized by him. It was not so; when the period of destruction had passed away, when reconstruction had set in, many of the most progressive made the culminating-points of the old their starting-points, and Goethe (who rejected nothing), not Rousseau, came to be the symbol of the first great step beyond the eighteenth century. All historic development, all instinctive valuation of aspiring man, go to prove that chaos is not the goal, but that it means at best an inevitable state of transition. This explains why all that tends towards chaos in the creative activity of these times bears the caste-mark of the transitory. The

types which advocate it go far to prove this fact. The world's experience proves that only that which corresponds to the highest possibilities of a time is part of an upward movement. Setting aside a few rare exceptions, this cannot be said of the expressionists. One need only listen to their doctrines: the weak man is the chosen one; art means suffering, its main aim is suppression of personality; they are preaching an absolute passivism. There is an active counterpart to them: the Bolshevik and the Futurist of Marinetti's type. But it is characteristic of this compensatory type that it is mechanistic to the degree of seeing the ideal of man in the automaton. Bolshevism with its rigid discipline represents the apotheosis of dead matter; to that extent it certainly is the strongest symbol of the Antichrist known in history; and Marinetti's doctrine amounts about to this, that life is less than shells, airplanes and lightning. To a person of understanding there can be no doubt left that the new movement as it appears today is leading to an impasse. In order to keep itself alive, Bolshevism returns to what it had meant to destroy; the passivistic form of art and life is dying of anæmia and etiolation in an age which is becoming iron again; and as to expressionism as a definite form of art, its originally strongest admirers confess more and more unanimously that it is in its decline.<sup>1</sup> There must therefore be a misconception similar to that of idealism and naturalism underlying this youngest tendency of expression in art and life, however right the instinct may have been which prompted it.—The road to essential progress can only be shown by a full explanation of the significance of

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<sup>1</sup> See W. Worringer's *Künstlerische Zeitfragen*, München, 1921.

this misunderstanding. And I have given the above historic and critical sketch only in order to get a clear view of the problem. We are now prepared to descend into the deeps of metaphysical problems with open eyes.

A COMPARISON of the masterworks of truly spiritual art—such as the mediæval Christian and more especially the Chinese,<sup>2</sup> the profoundest of all ages—with the modern-expressionistic art on the one hand, and on the other of the highest expressions of spiritual knowledge we know, the sayings of Jesus, Buddha and Lao-tse with the world-philosophy of modern theosophy, reveals an undeniable proportionality. The expressionist who paints things contrary or foreign to nature is doing nothing arbitrary—he represents correctly what his inner eye perceives, an organ which Goethe possessed to a high degree and which seems originally to belong to all children; and this inner eye does not perceive outward occurrences, but symbols of the inner life. The radical expressionist, therefore, does not imitate in principle; in his creations he gives symbolic expression to the unconscious impulses of his soul. Hence the feeling of deliverance (*Abreaktion*) when he has expressed himself, and the incomprehensibility of his creations to all for whom it does not have a similar significance; hence the general possibility of finding the true meaning of every eccentric and yet sincere expressionist picture by means of psycho-analysis. It is the same in the case of the various planes of reality the existence of which the theosophists assert—in this case, too, different and deeper layers of consciousness are in

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<sup>2</sup> See the essay on "*Die Bedeutung der chinesischen Kunst*" in *Philosophie als Kunst*, and the corresponding passages in my *Travel Diary*.



question, the home of other forms of phenomena than are normally known to us, and these also must be considered as symbols. When reading about the "spirits of form," "of wisdom" and the like in the lectures of Rudolf Steiner, one has, at first, an impression as of a primitive animism, and from the formal point of view it is correct. Yet the impression is false in fact, independently of the answer to the question whether the respective spirits do or do not exist outside the consciousness of Rudolf Steiner: it is false for this reason, that the Significance here is not arbitrarily attributed to the phenomena, but on the contrary gives birth to them out of itself. Both expressionism and theosophy are most interesting; they show the approach to planes of consciousness hardly explored hitherto. Only, contrary to their own assertions, *the reality they proclaim is not a spiritual reality*. One may certainly choose one's words as one likes, but if the distinction between nature and spirit is to be maintained, and if the concepts used are to have a scientific meaning, then "formations" as such never are spirit. Whatever their special character may be, they belong to the world of appearances, which are all interrelated according to natural laws; that is to say, they belong to nature taken in the widest sense of the word, and the subconscious regions of the soul are as much part of it as the normally conscious; the same is true of the loftiest planes of theosophy, as far as such exist. They are the planes of a certain kind of phenomena, which spirit may underlie; but they do not as such represent spirit. The word "spiritual" can only be correctly applied to what belongs to the region of Significance. Let us call to mind the results of the first chapter: everything spiritual belongs to the sphere of

Significance, but an earthly expression is material in any case; for this reason there is no difference in kind between alphabetical letters, words, ideas, men and gods considered from this point of view—as *expressions* they are all phenomena, belonging to the sphere of nature. Therefore, he who descends from the outer world into that of the subconscious and occult does not draw any nearer to the spirit correctly understood—he simply passes from one plane of phenomena to another. Thus expressionistic art and theosophy do really clear the way to deeper regions of nature, but they do not help to realize the spirit, the essence of which is Significance.

That this interpretation means no arbitrary act made for the benefit of a preconceived definition of the spirit, the validity of which might be disputable, is shown by the counter proof offered by every great spiritual art acknowledged as such, and by all the teachings of all the truly great saints and sages—they all give direct expression to Significance, and to Significance alone. The best of the Chinese images of Buddha are direct representations of the Significance of the Buddha religion, the profoundest creations of mediæval plastic art (take for instance those of the earliest painters of Siena), give direct expression to the Significance of Christianity; here all visible form is merely a means of expression, through which one perceives the Spirit as involuntarily, because as directly, as one disregards the letters when reading a sentence. And it is not a question of allegory here, as it is in the case of idealistic art, but of an expression of the transcendental spirit as direct as that of nature in the landscape of some great naturalist painter. In exactly the same way the profoundest sayings of the

great saints and sages give direct expression to Sense-truths, independent of all phenomenality. And they were so fully conscious of the circumstance that intentionally they did not leave behind them any definite teachings—*i.e.*, embodiments limited by space and time and therefore mortal, of what they meant, and that they all expressly made a stand against occultism, which considers deeper regions of nature as spiritual and therefore aims at knowledge of these as an approach to the Sense. Christ fulminated against the “adulterous race” of the lovers of the miraculous; Buddha spoke warning words against the intercourse with gods and similar apparitions, “not because they do not exist, but because paying attention to them is of no use to salvation.” No true saint ever assumed a positive inner attitude towards the effect of the unusual forces which emanated from him, as far as this effect was injurious to the recognition of the essential, as it only too easily is. And thus we arrive at what is decisively characteristic: the expression of the deepest meaning has never in any of the truly great cases stood in need of unusual or specialized means. Just as by words, truths and pictures taken from the workaday world Christ and Buddha have given to life impulses which emanated from the Depth of the Divine, and which have produced inexhaustible effects and go on producing them; just so the great spiritual art—I am thinking of the art which does not only originate in the cosmic, but leads to its experience—has an essentially normal and comprehensible appearance in spite of all possible simplification and stylization. It is *objectively* comprehensible, just as are the teachings of Jesus, and not only because we are

accustomed to them. The reason is that they give direct expression to Significance and mean nothing but Significance.

As was shown in the preceding chapter, Significance in its corresponding expression is directly comprehensible to anyone who knows the language employed and is at all capable of understanding. It is always the phenomena as such which are incomprehensible, and this for the very simple reason that phenomena as such cannot be understood at all: understanding always applies to spirit alone. For this reason it means an argument against the spiritual value of a work of art, if it is not only single and unique, but incomprehensible besides, because this very fact proves it to be essentially bound to empiric accidentals. Radical expressionism means nothing to the greater number of people, because the basis of its artistic creation is not in the spirit, but in subconscious regions of the soul, and these are always something exclusively singular. For the same reason it argues against an art, if it pleases but one generation (I entirely set aside here the question of the movements of fashion). Significance is superior to time and always equally comprehensible in principle; it has nothing to do with empiric quality or number. Just as the meaning of a book remains the same, whatever the number of the copies, so all true and real Significance is independent of the limitations of space and time; it therefore acts and operates through all changes of space and time. And the deepest Significance can do so in the most unobtrusive form. It needs no technical terms; there is nothing occult, nothing enigmatic about its appearance. The simpler its expression, the deeper does its influence work. No wonder: it is grasped all the

more directly, and therefore all the more easily. But this is only one side of the question: the deepest Sense-truths give expression to the keynotes of life. These are unconsciously vibrating in each and all; they are more easily sounded than all others because all the others bring them into motion, for which reason they are heard more often and more loudly than all others; they are, moreover, more easily sounded the poorer the rest of the momentary gamut. And then, understanding under any circumstances relates to Spirit only, so that it is all the easier to understand a meaning, the deeper the region of the Spirit to which it belongs. It need not be intellectually understood, but it is comprehended intuitively. Here we hold the key to the problem why the higher religions are those which seem to be the easiest to transmit; here too we hold the key to the problem of the genius of Language as such—a genius so great that often it is only necessary to meditate upon the meaning of words in order to obtain the deepest philosophic insights: language is a direct expression of Significance and originated as such without any side looks towards externals; thus it must needs express Meaning more purely than any later theory, which under all circumstances can only circumscribe.

Now I think it should be quite clear that where the spiritual is concerned, any question as to a special region of the phenomenal is beside the point. If there really were a question of such special regions as occultism imagines, the deepest would be the most difficult to understand. On the contrary, it may be said that the nearer the surface the location of the intended meaning, the more intricate are the means required to express it; for it is not the depth of the meaning, but the special



character of the appearance, which is the origin of all those complications which render understanding difficult. Nor does the circumstance that only the few fully understand the deepest, for which reason the profoundest books are considered to be the most difficult, provide an argument against the fact: they are difficult to the extent that understanding in itself is deficient, and not because of the difficulty of the expression; a person without intellectual gifts who may be capable of grasping metaphysical truths instinctively is obviously incapable of comprehending them intellectually, just as a blind man cannot see colours. Once more: unintelligibility and superficiality are normally connected, and not the former and depth. Christ's wisdom seems self-evident to millions who would never be able to understand a modern essayist. And it is self-evident just because it expresses the very deepest, the spiritual core of our being.

What is true of the spiritual decides in the last analysis. The spiritual element within us represents the keynote of all human Sense-melody. Ultimately religion and philosophy inspire all art. Every living surface presupposes the existence of a corresponding depth, however unconscious this last may remain. Not a finger nail could grow without metaphysical life. No change in fashion is fully comprehensible without knowledge of the deepest spirit of the age. Therefore, what is true of the profoundest Spirit must in principle be true of everything spiritual.

**SIGNIFICANCE** actually lives in another dimension than the most recondite regions of the phenomenal. And thus we return to the problems we posited in the introduction of our present considerations:

“Meaning” is not bound to any “art-style” as such. It is capable of expressing itself through the most various appearances, such as particular religions, particular philosophies or peculiar styles of art. The most various and differing, and even contradictory formations of thought and faith have been proved to be vessels of equally deep truth in the course of history. Significance lies essentially beyond the plane of the letter; it lies in a dimension which can in no wise be approached from materialistic premises. For this reason the teachings of theosophy must appear superficial to a profound mind, just where they wish to enunciate the deepest. In the first instance, they speak of phenomena—the external view of the spiritual, as I have elsewhere expressed it <sup>1</sup>—where spirit in itself is alone in question; secondly, for this very reason they point out chains of causation where there can only be a question of Sense-connexions. Thus, in their sphere, they revert to a stage in development which religion has passed since the Middle Ages—the stage in which historical and spiritual connexions were identified. How should the question of causation in the empiric sense lead to the spirit? How is the knowledge of historic sequence to be of any use as a means to understand the essence of things? In the near future it will be recognized that theosophy may perhaps be able to open the gates to the experience of regions of nature formerly unknown, but that it cannot on any account satisfy the longing for Spiritual Truth.

Let us return to the general problem. I said: “Meaning is not bound to any ‘style.’” In the sphere of art, not one of the Schools is justified in principle in claiming

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<sup>1</sup> See the essay, “Für und Wider die Theosophie,” in *Philosophie als Kunst*.

the monopoly of spirituality. In principle expressionism is in no wise a better means to achieve Sense-realization than were naturalism and idealism. Its failure is an indisputable fact in history. But now we are in a position to see the reason of its failure. A certain region of the phenomenal world has been mistaken for Significance by all the special schools of art our survey has dealt with, as far as they claimed the monopoly of the only possible road to the realization or to the most perfect expression of the Spirit. The idealist imagines that he seizes the essence of things in the formations of intellect or reason; the naturalist in those of nature; the expressionist in the hidden depth of soul-life. It is the same mistake in principle, though I cannot expatiate on it here,<sup>1</sup> which has been a check in the path of Occidental philosophy from the Greeks down to the present day: in this case the instruments of cognition were mistaken for the substance. Within *all* the various schools a few of the greatest artists have succeeded in expressing the essence of things; in this respect the assertions of our historical sketch must be set right. It is true that the general point of view of the expressionist in the widest sense of the word (not in the narrow sense considered last), corresponds best to Meaning, inasmuch as art and life are "expressionism" under any circumstance—*i.e.*, the striving for self-realization from the

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<sup>1</sup> I have expatiated on this train of thought in the lecture "*Ost und West auf der Suche nach der gemeinsamen Wahrheit*," in *Philosophie als Kunst*, and in the Logos supplement *Zur Psychologie der Systeme*, 1910, as well as in my communication to the International Congress of Philosophers in Bologna, 1911, entitled *Die metaphysische Wirklichkeit*; a series of lectures going into the details of the same problem is waiting to be worked out. I gave it at the Hamburg University in 1911, the title being "*Der Fortschritt der Philosophie im Wandel ihrer Problemstellungen*."

inside to the outside; an attitude consciously assumed as corresponding to this meaning naturally facilitates its realization, whereas the language of pure imitation (naturalism), or that of indirect expression (idealism) renders it more difficult. Hence the possibility of that historical line of development, the course of which was stated at the beginning. All great art has, therefore, been fundamentally expressionistic, even where its outward appearance seemed entirely different. Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," for instance, expresses a spiritual quality altogether unique, because the expression of the figure of Christ in its vital relationship to the background of landscape symbolizing the infinite, gives to a composition which from the formal point of view should have to be called naturalistic-idealistic, a dimension of depth which straightway points to the ultimate depths of the soul. Something similar is true of Raphael's "Madonna" of the Sistine Chapel, and of the greatest of Rembrandt's portraits of old men. And yet from a technical point of view, Leonardo must be placed among the imitative and intellectually constructive artists, Raphael among the idealists and Rembrandt, like all Dutchmen, among the naturalists; for not one of them intentionally aspired to spirit-realization; each of them had a different personal intention, and the Higher was vouchsafed to them, as it were, by Divine Grace. In the same sense, Greek art must be called idealistic as well as naturalistic, and yet what we had to say of the classicism of the nineteenth century is true only of its Roman successor. Here, also, spirit was realized in the expressionistic sense, only in another language. Just so, there have been a few modern impressionists who reveal

essential "deeps" through their "impressions"; just so, there exists not only an art, most distant from any imitation of nature, but even an eccentric and extravagant spiritual art which yet gives expression to the same deeps as does the great art of China. Wilhelm Nolde is doubtless a genuine religious painter, whatever one may think of his particular style.

In the same sense we must also correct the assertions of our historical sketch which relate to styles of life: there have been very great spirits whose "style" was idealistic, naturalistic or radically expressionistic, as the case may be, with all their respective errors. Only such greatness can never be attributed to one style or another as such, but to the greatness and depth of the men who were capable of expressing themselves in any language in spite of its limitations. Leonardo's "Last Supper" is a sublimely religious work of art one might say *in spite* of its material language, and with his temperament of the natural scientist, Leonardo has only created this one work of this kind. The comparison of Michelangelo with his Bolognese successors shows most clearly that it is not in any way a question of language in the external sense of the word—of how deep an importance it is in a deeper sense I shall show later on—and that it is not responsible for spiritual significance. Many of the Bolognese were men of great talent, yet they appear much less great than they actually were, and are therefore continually misjudged, because they tried to use the art-language of Buonarroti; the similarity of the means of expression led to the result that the differences in other respects stood out with singular clarity. The full understanding of the problem involved here gives a new



significance to the rotation of styles.<sup>1</sup> And now at last we are in a position to understand the true meaning of the introductory historic sketch. No style in itself expresses what it was created to realize by means of its expression. It may be an objectively more perfect means of expressing certain spiritual contents, yet the best of languages is nothing but an empty babble of words, when he who speaks it has nothing to say. The knowledge of the best technique of religious representation—and such a technique certainly exists—has never been able to create religious art, where faith was lacking. That is why the curve of the life and significance of every style drops as soon as the spiritual impulse which called it to life leaves it, until it finally dies a natural death. As soon as the impulse begins to lose its strength, the way of the Spirit is replaced by the way of nature—*i.e.*, rotation, because everything individual and single exhausts itself, the movement of creation as such never comes to a standstill and the number of the elements of possible reality is finite; each dying style is replaced by its complement which can be foretold according to physiological laws.

But now also we are in a position to understand the

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<sup>1</sup>There is in fact a real rotation of styles, because of the finite number of possibilities of expression, the limitation of the problems which each form of expression is apt to solve, the exhaustion and, as its result, the need of contrast and change which is the fate of all one-sided activity. The change from impressionistic to expressionistic and from idealistic to naturalistic art answers to the same actual need as the changes of fashion. How far this is expressed by pure chromat-ics and what are the laws of complication or simplification in this case have been convincingly and conclusively elucidated by Victor Goldschmidt in his monumental and richly illustrated book, *Farben in der Kunst*, Heidelberg, Karl Winter, 1919. The problem of the congelation and decay of every definite formation is conclusively investigated in the lecture, "Symbolism of History," contained in this book.

metaphysical significance of the mistaken idea which sees a progressive movement in the change of styles. All formations, in the first instance, are nothing but so many languages—this is true of definite world-philosophies and religions as well as of the lines of development in art; that is to say, their meaning lies beyond them; it does not coincide with the visible letter, as long as they are vital; taken in themselves, all these forms express nothing but themselves. This fact is not easily recognized so long as life animates the forms—because they actually represent the adequate means of expression as long as their life lasts, and whoever employs them participates in their vital quality. But every style is as finite and one-sided in its possibilities of expression as the individual; for this reason it must appear inadequate as soon as life or art puts up new problems; and this happens again and again and will go on repeating itself for ever for the simple reason that there are only finite practical tasks, and that when one task is completed, spiritual longing looks out for new ones; and these always lie at first in a direction different from those which were last completed, because change of activity belongs to the necessary rhythm of progressive life. Moreover, every style becomes rigid and hard as it ages, and it ends by becoming mere mannerism. The deeper a road is cut up, the more difficult even the most energetic of individuals will find it to keep out of the ruts. Under these circumstances, it is only natural, however wrong it may be, that every new generation should think a change of style a progress. The new language creates what analytical psychology calls a new momentum of libido, that is to say a new direction for the activity of psychic energy. Significance cannot be

realized without means of expression, just as the soul must wear a body, in order to operate on earth; a new Meaning therefore calls for new means of expression. Now when life no more follows up the aims still set to it by the routine of an extinct impulse, the will to act gets banked up inwardly, until it has found a means of expression. Then it breaks forth in a mighty stream as the invincible spiritual current of an age, and every individual who joins in it feels set free and is really for the time being able to say more than he could express before.

The reason why it is always a case of such general currents and not of individual forms of expression, although individuals always are, of course, the first to seize the impulse of the time, is this: that the unconscious of all human beings is in some way connected and develops and changes very uniformly. (I only hint at the facts here, which C. G. Jung was the first to deal with thoroughly in his above-mentioned works, though as yet they are far from being fully understood; and I forego all interpretations and explanations for the present.) The Christian tone of life triumphed over the pagan because it was the embodiment of a general reaction against the sensuality and brutality of late antiquity; and since the Renaissance the reaction against the ascetic spirit of the preceding fifteen hundred years has been as general a reaction, which seems to have exhausted itself at the present moment, a circumstance which is of the greatest importance in clearing the way for a return of the mediæval spirit. When a certain creative type becomes historically possible, there arise simultaneously, and from the same subconscious basis, men of a corresponding understanding. Today a great

many of the most highly gifted of all countries hail chaos and whatever may lead towards it; today Bolshevism finds followers of true worth all over the world, because the collective unconscious has got weary of the over-mechanized life which the nineteenth century had crystallized into, and there is a tremendously strong banking up of the libido, which, for the moment, is bent upon breaking through the dam.

From the empiric point of view, then, each new generation is justified in thinking a new style a progress, for its birth always means new possibilities of free expression. Yet it is never the style as such which really matters, be it ever so spiritual. What is really aimed at through all the various styles—every one of which satisfies only as long as it has not grown rigid—belongs to a different dimension. The styles in themselves never mean more than so many languages. One language may certainly provide possibilities of expression which others lack, yet, judged from the point of view of spirit, all languages are in principle of equal value. And this is true of every possible means of embodiment. It is true not only of the various art-styles, philosophies and religions; it is equally true of the peoples. A people as such is no more the bearer of an absolute value than any given style; it is significant in direct proportion to the spiritual values embodied in it. Such embodiment has taken place, as experience teaches us, to different degrees within the different periods of their existence. Biologically speaking, all nations remain the same in essence throughout the hundreds and thousands of years; yet the Greeks have been the creators and promoters of the highest spirit only for a few short centuries, the Italians have been twice up to now, the

Germans once—the reason of the fact lies in the pre-stabilized harmony of the *Zeitgeist* and the national character in question; a subject I will expatiate upon in my investigation of the Symbolism of History. But this is not the only reason. The decisive reason lies in the kind of spirit which incarnates or does not incarnate in the different peoples. Or viewed from another angle: it depends on the depth of Significance which a nation is able to incarnate into the facts of its being. Just as in the case of the arts, everything here depends on the depth of Sense-apprehension. Every people may become great when it learns to express the deepest, a thing possible in every language; but not one of them is of any spiritual value whatsoever unless it be fecundated by the spirit. That is why it is so absurd to claim the monopoly of spiritual significance for certain nations or certain races. Races and nations are, from the point of view of the spirit, nothing more than so many languages. Nowadays we have come to look upon the idea of a religious war as grotesque; it is to be hoped that soon it will be the same, where the fights of nationalities are in question.

ON WHAT does the spiritual value of a phenomenon depend?—We are now in the position to give the final answer to the question: it depends on the degree in which Meaning manifests itself in the expression. I was just speaking of the culminating points in the lives of nations: each nation appears great, and great only then, when it incarnates a spirit of true value; that is to say, when it represents a symbol (*Sinnbild* in German). But this is only the case, when meaning and expression are in exact correspondence with each other; which



means, in the case of peoples, when eternal spirit permeates the whole of its specific character. Experience shows that it never does any good to take over or represent an alien spirit, be it ever so perfect.<sup>1</sup> Here, then, we have reached the point of the problem of Significance where we left it the last time. We had come to the conclusion that all images have to be read as symbols. If we translate this axiom into terms of activity, then its purport is the following: *all facts must be transformed into symbols, they must be conquered and permeated by the spirit; on the other hand, the meaning in question must be perfectly expressed by means of the given facts.*

This can be done because Meaning is the primary thing. That this is so is conclusively proven by the mere fact of Language. Language is a direct expression of Significance; it could never have become what it is if it were otherwise—if, for instance, imitation played the slightest part in its formation; language is the greatest work of genius the human mind has achieved up to now, because the spiritual expresses itself in it with the direct ingenuousness of the blossoming plant. The same is proved by all the facts which came within the range of our preceding observations: the way an invention is brought to life, or a work of art, or the progressive spiritualization of a face. That is the reason why a child as a rule understands the meaning of words before understanding the words themselves; and why understanding is very nearly independent of exact knowledge of a language; understanding is an *a priori*, because Significance everywhere underlies the expression as its

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<sup>1</sup> See the essay, "*Idealismus und nationale Erziehung*," in *Philosophie als Kunst*.

creative cause. For this reason only can spirit change and mould nature; for this reason only are culture, art and progressive life possible at all. To this extent all life is "expressionism," no matter whether man is aware of the fact or not. Whatever may have been Leonardo's or Dürer's personal point of view, the painter does not copy nature; by the material which nature offers to him he expresses a spiritual essence, whether it be his own spirit or that of the things. Whatever theoretical notions may be held about "experience" as the origin of all understanding, the philosopher gives a soul to the universe by his spontaneous interpretation of the facts. Even the scientist "dictates her laws to Nature"; as Kant put it, he does not take them from her.

"Meaning" actually is the primary thing everywhere. All naturalistic art-theories lead *ad absurdum*, because they fail to recognize this fact, and so does all epistemological empiricism; and the same applies to all one-sided or one-dimensional life-interpretation, because life can only be understood from its spiritual centre. For this reason, even physical life can never be explained in terms of a mechanistic theory. Nothing chemical or physical within the organism can be rightly interpreted without the premise of a Sense-connexion, which regulates its operations from within; the co-operation of organs and functions within the physical organism is a phenomenon of exactly the same order as the articulation of language with its grammar and syntax. Not the organs are the primary phenomena, but their connexion is the primary thing, and this connexion is nothing else but an immediate expression of Significance. Trying to understand life as something physical and chemical amounts to the same as trying to gather the meaning of

a sentence from the letters of the alphabet as such. The truth of the case would not be misunderstood so often if the concept of Significance were not habitually taken in far too limited a sense. Significance is the last term understanding can arrive at; there is nothing to be sought, because there is nothing more to be found beyond the meaning in itself of a thought—even though the given meaning may have thousands of additional backgrounds of Significance. For this reason, it only stands in the way of vital understanding, if one looks out for a definition of Significance—only the transitory or external can be defined; a final resort cannot possibly be further defined. It is, of course, possible to go on *speculating*, but in this connexion I leave this entirely out of the question, and I would caution all others against it, because, where cognition is concerned, only certainties are of value. The Significance I mean can be explained further than it has been up to now only to this extent: it is not a question of a logical or an ethical or some particular æsthetic Significance; for all these “Significances” are only partial expressions of what may be called Significance in itself; and this word is not meant to be understood as a metaphysical substance, but as a name for a species or genus. Grand music is wonderfully meaningful, but its meaning cannot be defined in intellectual terms. Programmatical music is a mistake; if Richard Strauss is said to bear a musical correspondence to all pictures and impressions, this is caused by a special and untransferable correspondence within his brain and spirit, which has no supra-individual background. A purely chromatic composition may be full of deep meaning in its way—but this meaning cannot be expressed in any other language than in just that

of colour. Thus the significance of nature eludes all intellectual definition. Even where a human face is progressively spiritualized, so that matter becomes more and more a pure means of expression of the soul—even in this case, where our own soul is at work, we cannot compress this spiritual into an intellectual formula. Logic also only *expresses* Significance, it does not coincide with it. And ultimately every vital meaning is essentially unique. Every being has ultimately its own individual significance. That is why all anthropomorphism, all judging of others by oneself, is a fundamental mistake. For this reason it is not only practically hopeless, but methodically wrong to look out for an Ultimate Basic Meaning of the world, or whatever one may call it. Such ultimate meaning may possibly exist, but it will never be possible to ascertain which of the two is ultimately right, the monist or the monadologue, because both are right in certain respects. Since in the case of Significance it is a question of pure quality, every attempt at unification must result in failure; only quantities, not qualities, can be unified in terms of intellectual abstracts. I will say only this much here: by “Meaning in itself” I mean the ultimate spiritual Reality which our mind is able to conceive; that ultimate Reality which is identical with the source of life itself, whatever this may be; the “meanings” which can be ascertained on this side of it already belong to the plane of formations, which Meaning originally created out of its own inner being. And moreover, whatever Meaning may be in itself, viewed and judged in its creative being, it reveals itself as something which is eternally in motion, in creative and effectual activity, something dynamic and not static. It is not only true

that meaning only becomes real by expression; it is continually *striving* for expression. On the plane of nature this is evident in the purposefulness of all organizations, every one of which is as perfect in its way as only the greatest of artists could create it. On the plane of human life with its greater freedom, whether it manifests itself as art or in a special mode of life, it is evident in the continual striving for perfection, in spite of all failure, all misunderstanding, mistakes and errors. Striving man does not rest until he has transformed all occurrences into Destiny, until he has conquered all of what was at first external as a means of expressing the inward—be this in the form of immediate life, understanding or creative activity. And he invariably feels that he is working out his destiny more truly, the more he strives thus. The deeper the spiritual keynotes to which he relates the external side of his life, the deeper his content, the greater does his achievement appear.

IT IS now our task to define the ultimate relationship between Meaning and Expression.—The formulæ we last arrived at have shown conclusively, first of all, why no language as such embodies spiritual values. The deepest may be expressed in any language. In so far no special form of art, no world-philosophy or religion, taken literally, may be exalted above all others. If one appears better qualified than another to express a given spiritual quality, the reason is a peculiar suitability of certain means to provide a body for given Significance. Thus bronze is better suited than marble for certain plastic aims; thus Latin, Greek and Sanscrit are more suitable for liturgic purposes than any modern language. But the idea of superiority can be applied



only with regard to the embodiment, not to the Meaning. The problem must therefore be envisaged from another angle: on what does Sense-realization depend, setting aside the suitability of the means of language employed?

In the first instance, it depends on the simple fact of being expressed at all. Here we have reached a fundamental insight: Sense can only be realized on earth by expressing itself. It is possible that many who are incapable of expression have the power of divining the deepest of truths; it seems even to be a fact that profundity impedes the power of expression. The introverted spirit is generally characterized by a very slight interest in external reality; when a certain limit of concentration has been attained, speech easily turns into faltering utterance. But this does not alter the fact that only that which has been really expressed means a realization of spirit, by which it can go on operating; that only the *suitable* expression creates a normal living body for Significance. Wherever it is to be realized, Meaning postulates a *corresponding* Expression. Practically, Meaning and Expression cannot be separated, although they belong to entirely different planes of existence. Thus the result of the philosophy of Significance coincides with all art-theory and all ethics to the extent that ultimately everything depends on Expression. Only the former offers a background to the latter, which was lacking before.

If now with one rapid glance of survey we again compare the chaotic way of utterance of the radically expressionistic artist-generation with the severe form of the East-Asiatic, keeping in view how instinctively every connoisseur values this latter more, we can no longer

miss the way from experience to full understanding. The spiritual, which all art and all life strive to realize, is in itself pure Significance—*i.e.*, the spiritual background of reality. But this Meaning can manifest itself only when the Expression corresponds entirely to the Meaning. Every individual is unique: it follows that in order to express itself within the sphere of phenomena, every Meaning requires particular means of Expression, not only in the general sense of style and language, but it requires individually defined means; that is why individual style is so decisive, and why it is impossible to render the great thoughts of an author in other words than his own, even in the language in which he himself writes. Where the means of Expression which exactly correspond to it are lacking, Meaning simply does not exist on the plane of facts. It is no more there than a soul without a body; such a soul cannot act on earth, except by the intermediary of a medium. But it can only really act when it wears a *perfect* body. The question can also be envisaged from another angle. *Why* are all the creations of nature perfect? Because here Significance has found an altogether adequate expression. Every plant, every animal has just those organs which are necessary to it, and they co-operate harmoniously. But the greater the liberty, the more rare is the necessary congruency. Human beings are not often capable of saying what they mean; they do what they ought to do only in exceptional cases, and they rarely attain what corresponds to the aspirations of their own being. One of the reasons for this is, no doubt, that they rarely become conscious of their ultimate aims. Yet the main point for practical purposes is this, that becoming conscious depends on the

realization by means of the Expression. *The former really coincides with the latter.* It is absolutely impossible to experience any kind of Significance, in whatever form, without its expressing itself in that very way. The particular Expression may not have the transferable quality<sup>1</sup>—this was the case with a great many of the mystics—nevertheless, to him who had the experience it meant Sense-realization, because by means of it he understood what he meant. Practically, therefore, to miss the Meaning may be interpreted as an insufficient power of Expression, as all artists have always instinctively felt it to be. Therefore every improvement of Expression directly benefits the Meaning. The Expression actually gives birth to the latter. Only when one considers how best to express a meaning, does this become clear. Thus a process of concentration which apparently focuses externals gives birth to the inmost deeps.

But this formula is still subject to an important qualification. It is only the striving for expression which has its origin in the depth that makes profound; the ambition of the virtuoso never yet made anybody profound. Even the highest gift of expression is spiritually significant only when a correspondingly profound mind makes use of it. One can very well have the gift of language without having anything to say. This is the explanation of the discrepancy proved by all experience between technical and essential progress. The spiritual significance of a language depending entirely on him who speaks it, there certainly is progress in the sphere of artistic technique, but never in the sphere of art as such; this last has ever passed over deep valleys from summit to summit,

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<sup>1</sup> See the study, "*Die begrenzte Zahl bedeutsamer Kulturformen,*" in *Philosophie als Kunst*,

and it will never be otherwise. And for the same reason, there is progress in the sphere of scientific recognition, but not in that of wisdom. Scientific correctness in itself never means more than correctness of expression; science can never give more than a grammar and syntax, at best the æsthetics of nature; under any circumstances it belongs to the region of language. For him who speaks, unless he be an original creator of language, language is never more than an inherited means of expression and its own meaning is of no interest in relation to him; thus he who strikes a match in the right way need not have the slightest spark of Promethean spirit. Nevertheless, the technical progress of language must be called absolute on its own plane. Each medium has its own laws, the understanding of which makes a master of the slave. There are not only laws of nature; there are also laws of thought, of musical harmony and of chromatic concordance, of right volition and action. As soon as these are violated, the Sense-expression amounts to what one may call a diseased production, a monstrosity within the sphere of nature. The nature of a human being may remain unconscious of its destiny; may then live itself out ever so powerfully—whatever it does remains ultimately meaningless. A man may not be able to express what he means; in that case he will utter an untruth even where he means truth, and as an artist he will be a bungler in spite of all inner visions.

At this point objectively scientific knowledge of facts, without any personal Sense-conception, can guard from many a mistake; this is the merit of technical progress, and as I have said before, it must be called absolute where it is found. But what is the importance of all technical progress when compared with the possibility of essential

progress? Not that practical knowledge should ever be able to replace personal understanding, but that new and more penetrative understanding and creative work should become possible, because a greater number of truths have become self-evident and need no longer occupy the conscious. Thus, physiologically, the spiritual freedom of man depends on the automatically correct workings of the organic processes.

But for all that, the dimension of spiritual value remains untouched in principle by the achievements of technical progress. Spiritual value always depends on the degree to which meaning is realized by expression. In this case its technical perfection alone is of no use whatsoever. Significance is something purely inward, and to be seized only from within. Only the expression which incarnates meaning is really vital. This is the reason why the fact will always remain, that *personality* alone gives spiritual significance to what may be ever so good from the objective point of view.

THUS it is from the point of view of Significance, and in truth only from that point of view, that we arrive at the true idea of past-mastership. Each special meaning necessitates adequate means of expression, otherwise it cannot express itself at all. Why it should be so—to think about that is idle; the correlation of Meaning and Expression is the primal spiritual phenomenon. On the spiritual plane the laws are just as fixed as on that of nature. Its most general and external ones are defined by logic and mathematics, grammar and syntax, and the theories of chromatics and harmony. But the subjection to laws does not end in the deeper regions of Significance; they are only different



laws which prevail here. Wherever meaning is realized, there is appearance, and all appearance is regulated by definite laws. He who would present the spirit of nature as a painter must have understood nature's special significance, and must correlatively to this fully master the laws of material reality, although he may afterwards transform them as much as he likes; for this reason the Japanese disciples of art begin by spending years on slavish copying-work, in order to be able to emancipate themselves later on: the norms of nature must have become to them the natural means of expression. Whoever paints as a religious artist and is capable of expression, involuntarily creates peculiar forms, and such forms as give truthful expression to the religious impulse therefore resemble one another all over the world. In the sphere of intellectual creation the case is not quite so simple, because man is not only an independent subject, but at the same time he is a product of interference. He not only represents himself, he is a representative of his race and culture, of the inherited language of thought and forms, of a definite religious faith, of transmitted ideas and historical junctures. During antiquity and the Middle Ages long centuries have treated the same unchanging given subjects; and although it is very often a question of basic symbols which are of personal interest to everybody, their non-individual character remains a fact nevertheless. All Germans, all Frenchmen think and feel as such in a specific way, quite independently of their personal characters. Western philosophy since Kant involuntarily employs his conceptual language, in the same way that it had been inwardly dependent on Aristotle up to that time. In the East a similar historic dependence asserts itself even more strongly. But all

this inheritance which each individual has to take over has its own particular grammar; whoever really masters this can express himself in spite of all that is alien to him personally. Only he must really master the grammar.

And now at last we are in a position to understand the full purport of the historic introduction and to realize simultaneously in what respect language, in the deeper sense, is of the highest possible importance to the expression. All styles are, of course, of equal value in principle—*i.e.*, a sufficiently gifted person is capable of expressing the highest in the language of each. *But the expression will be more or less adequate according to the circumstance, whether the Sense-connexion, which the means of expression as such represents, harmonizes with that which should be expressed.* The fact is that the sharp distinction between meaning and language, which we have kept up during this chapter for the sake of a better elucidation of the problem at stake, does not hold good to the end. For every expression of life, as such, represents a Sense-connexion, even where it signifies something external and dead from the point of view of actual life. There is a significance in every word as such, in every organ, every instrument and every institution. For this reason, when a meaning is to be correctly expressed, it is not so much a question of immediately materializing spirit, as of bringing the latter into a necessary organic relationship with the specific significances of the means of expression. The deepest can be said in any language, because all the treble notes refer to the basic tones, but in every special case it must be differently expressed, in order to bring about the necessary harmonious relationship between the spirit of the language in question and personal meaning. The same trend of thought leads us to understand why pref-

erence must be given to scientific expression in contradistinction to the mythological, and hence the possibility of progress within the sphere of knowledge: objective truth is a more adequate means of expression than lies and errors. The fundamental problem is to find one common denominator for *all* particular significances—that is, the common denominator of what one may call Ultimate Significance. This, then, is the final wording of the necessary relation between meaning and expression.

And now it should also be finally clear in what respect art and life are entirely alike in significance. If in life one says, "Develop into what you are," it is evidently the same as when one asks of the artist and the philosopher, "Give perfect expression to what you mean." But this implies nothing less than that æsthetics only have true meaning on the basis of presupposed ethics. To find the adequate expression on the plane of art is exactly the same as to act rightly on the plane of life. In this case, too, everyone who strives is impelled by a feeling of duty, for a meaning is only there if it is understood and realized; life has a meaning only when man does not consider its empiric processes as last resorts, but as a means of expression of something higher or deeper.

Now, as a conclusion, let us look back to the final result of the first chapter. It was shown that our Western body of thought is the predestined body of the Eastern depth of Sense-perception. The knowledge we have gained by now leads to a new expression of the same truth, which brings it into relation with an even deeper centre of Significance. The relation between the East and the West actually is the same as that between meaning and expression. But as the former is only realized in the latter, the meaning which the East has in mind

can only be made real and effective by the perfection of the means of expression offered by our Western science and technique. More than that, the perfection of the means of expression, as such, if it is applied in the right spirit, may give access to depths of Significance far beyond the imagination of the East. . . . This possibility presupposes two things; that humanity finally learns to appraise and treat the external sphere, within which all scientific and technical progress moves, as a means of expression and not as an end in itself. But that simultaneously it brings the means of expression as such to ever greater perfection. Humanity must ascend to a new level of Sense-apprehension, to a level which makes it possible to overlook and comprehend as a whole what from lower levels cannot be recognized as connected. Everything ultimately depends upon Significance. Everything may be full of meaning; nothing need be. The letter as such is no last resort; everything depends on the Spirit it expresses. But the Spirit must—and this is a fact which the East ignores and which our own culture has not always understood, inasmuch as it has often considered as Spirit what is only the letter—the Spirit must have found a literal expression exactly corresponding to it in order to act on earth.

PART SECOND  
ON THE REALIZATION OF  
SIGNIFICANCE





# FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS



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## *Introductory: The Culture of Making all Things Easy*

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AGAIN and again we are told that the Occident is on the decline: the title of Spengler's great intellectual novel has become a catchword. And those who compare these times with those of the Wanderings of the Nations, or prophesy an inevitable barbarization, are echoed as eagerly. Thus the so-called educated class is developing a curious consciousness which may best be characterized as a feeling that it is justified to abide in the mood of a man facing bankruptcy. This feeling finds its expression less in the urge for the *carpe diem* of late antiquity which at least knew how to enjoy profoundly, than in a purely object-bound craving to liquidate *à tout prix*. Wealth is being spent as boundlessly, and at the same time with as little concomitant joy, as the Puritans, the fathers of capitalism, had amassed it. And this is the case on the intellectual as well as on the material plane.—In what respect on the spiritual plane? The answer is: much, far too much of what is considered as progressive in reality means liquidation. The intellectual West really liquidates in so far as its most recent cultural aim seems to be to make all things easy.

THERE are many who still feel it to be their duty to find fault with the movies; yet even most of these frequent them, and with real pleasure. Psychologists and æsthetes have gone into the reasons of the triumph of the motion-picture which led to the discovery

that this triumph, in the first instance, is due to the fact that, looking at the living motion-picture implies real and absolute relaxation. When reading the most inane of books one is compelled to think, however little; every theatrical performance forces the spectator into its three-dimensional field of forces; but the movies can be enjoyed with hardly any personal brain activity. What one experiences here resembles the process of dreaming. Now absolute relaxation is certainly an excellent thing. One of the many reasons for the high quality of English politics lies in the fact that its leaders know how to relax at times to a degree unknown to continentals. Nor do I doubt that within the specific art-convention of the cinema, as within every other properly understood and adhered to, remarkable results may be achieved. Still, these considerations do not alter the fact that it renders mental activity superfluous to an unheard-of degree. It is quite impossible to read Chinese writing without mental labor, because only the understanding of an ideogram-matical combination makes its external reception possible; one must put something of oneself into every book one reads; but nothing of the kind is required when looking at the movies. The other day, a company applied to me asking my permission to make a motion picture of my *Travel Diary*. I should almost have liked to acquiesce from sheer curiosity. It was clear to me at once what it was all about: the plan was to make easier the comprehension of my book.

DEMOCRACY is considering everywhere and with gusto the introduction of purely phonetic orthography. Why should one make things difficult by taking into account the significance and history of a word



in addition to its sound? It is true that Greece should be a warning. If I am rightly informed, it was the first to take the plan of a new orthography into practical consideration, because of the excessive discrepancy there is in modern Greek between orthography and pronunciation; it was also the first to drop the plan. But the warning is not taken to heart. Bolshevik Russia is already writing according to the indications of a "tempered" ear, as it were; and something similar may temporarily come to pass everywhere. Why indeed should one make things difficult? For the very same reasons, the English language is triumphing all over the world. Not Shakespeare's English, to be sure, but the English of the colonials, whose vocabulary is hardly more extensive than that of the Hawaiian and can easily be acquired and mastered in a fortnight by anybody who is not a downright fool. The French still believe in the possibility of a cultural imperialism of France: here, too, they entirely misunderstand the symptoms of the age. The French language, as such, stands and falls with severe and purified form; it must be correctly learnt and mastered in a superior manner. Thus its spirit is absolutely opposed to the spirit of this epoch of liquidation, and there is no altering the facts either by the cult of the military idiom or by the efforts of Claudel and other enemies of Latinity to Germanize the language. For this epoch has but the one idea: to make all things easy.

THOSE who wield the power in Germany today consider the *Volkshochschule*<sup>1</sup> as the only really ideal college, though they do not openly admit it. Nothing is to be withheld from the masses. And action irre-

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<sup>1</sup>The popular university special to Germany.

sistibly follows the intention. But things take a different turn from what was expected: in order to address unprepared audiences in the appropriate way, the teachers must retrench not only the demands they make upon their audience, but also the demands they wish to satisfy. This implies that they must make less and less demands upon themselves. The result is that the mass is not raised, but, on the contrary, that it draws the teachers down to its own level. The *Volkshochschule* simply does not admit the difference in qualification of the prepared and the unprepared; it starts from the premise that all are equally qualified for the reception of the highest knowledge, just as to Rousseau's idea all human beings were originally good. It follows that no arduous work of preparation is required; one should just make things easy for himself.—And what is true of the *Volkschhochschule* is also true of all art meant for the people. However wonderful the creations of the popular spirit may sometimes be, he who directly focuses the mass must become shallow or coarse. For this reason, and not for reasons of external imitation, does latter-day Europe converge more and more towards America. The productions of Max Reinhardt's *Grosses Schauspielhaus* cannot but give the impression as of being separated by worlds from the best of his chamber pieces. Whoever focuses the ideal of making all things easy must bring about results differing from those achieved by one who assumes the positive inner attitude of taking things seriously in the old humanistic way.

A CHILD should not under any circumstances be overburdened. However justified and right the demand may be, whenever I hear it made, I involuntarily

have to think of the difference between Negro and French children (I mention the latter because, of all Europeans, their hereditary substance contains the greatest amount of culture blood). Negro children, who often are very sharp originally, get weary astonishingly soon; the older they grow, the less demands can be made upon them. Whereas French children are not only capable of acquiring an immense amount of material knowledge and of standing a degree of mental training scarcely known in the rest of Europe, but they hardly experience any diminution of personal versatility and originality in consequence of this overburdening. Therefore, the question of what demands may be made upon a child in the very first instance depends on the cultural level to which the child belongs and on the ideal aims it is to fulfil. Now the ruling tendency of this day decidedly favors the development of the Negro type. This is proved by many a creative example in the sphere of art. If a painter is only capable of placing one dream-picture beside the other, this implies, apart from other things, a deficiency in his power of concentration; the compulsory childishness of dadaistic meetings does not heighten originality. Work dare not be expected any more; or if at all, then only in so inferior a sense that one feels reminded of the mental activity of the ox. For even the lowest races can be made into very good slaves, because in the case of slave work there is no question of intellectual initiative. If the German statesman who appears most responsible for the terms of the Treaty of Versailles felt the getting done of the day's work, as such, quite independently of its success as a thing highly meritorious and is praised for this merit to this very day, although he let go one position after another which might have been held (the day's

work had to be "got through"—and if the enemies would not give way, why then I must! may have been his idea), then this proves that in the Germany of the immediate post-war period work was only understood as slave work. But this kind of work does not imply any real exertion.—When in my childish days I asked questions, my father, on principle, answered each one only once. The second time I had either to recall the answer from my memory or to find it again for myself. And whenever it was at all possible, he let me discover the truth of the facts myself from the outset. And I soon learnt to recognize gratefully how beneficial such making-things-difficult is. I owe all later success to the increasingly higher demands I made upon myself. For this reason I find it quite impossible to accept the belief that any true progress can result from the ideal of making-all-things-easy.

NEVERTHELESS, I do not dispute the right of existence of this culture of making-all-things-easy. It belongs essentially to the process of liquidation we are passing through. We had overstrained ourselves. Now—to use a Hindoo term—a spiritual Pralaya has set in. To let the results of spiritual activity fall to the share of everybody without any trouble on his part certainly means the most subtle, the most elegant and also the politest way of denying the Spirit. Never was Spirit more highly valued than nowadays! The great minds formerly accessible only to the few are now to be open books to all! Henceforth no light is to be hid beneath a bushel! This certainly seems a well-meaning plan. But, unfortunately, it belongs to the essence of the spiritual, that it is realized only by ac-

tivity; not by the activity of him only who creates it, but also of him who receives it. Can it be said that the meaning of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is contained in the printed pages which retain it externally? Not really; the meaning is created afresh every time it is understood. Otherwise it is not there. The *mysterium magnum* of the book lies in the fact that, without containing anything but letters, it externally assures the perpetual re-creation of a certain meaning by the particular arrangement of those letters. But this resurrection of the meaning depends entirely on the personal exertion of the reader. If the latter does not add something of himself, nothing comes to life. *Therefore nothing can be brought to life where one makes things easy.* And therefore the idea of making the Spirit more powerful by making it popular is fundamentally wrong.

Spirit only grows by the overcoming of natural inertia. The wonderful power of combination of the Chinese is the direct consequence of the circumstance that for them it is impossible to read without concomitant synthetic-comprehending thinking. The educational power of the French language is a consequence of the fact that the mastery of that language implies intellectual mastery. The discrepancy between the orthography and the pronunciation is the most important circumstance which prevents modern English from entirely trivializing the mind. And the same is true to a still higher degree of modern Greek. The reason why the greater number of modern Greeks, who, in reality, have few spiritual qualities, yet appear to have cultural qualifications is principally to be found in the fact that in order to understand, every Greek who is not an analphabet is forced to combine the sound-association not only with visual asso-



ciations, but also with a long and very intellectual history. If a purely phonetic orthography were ever introduced in Greece, there would soon be nothing but Levantines there.

And the same is true of the various conventions which provide the frame to all artistic activity. The severe form of the sonnet, and more especially of the fugue, is almost entirely responsible for many of the highest achievements of the human spirit, whereas, on the other hand, it is an immediate result of the lack of form of the most modern poetry and music that its creations very often appear so lamentably unspiritual. The more initiative there is in the creator and in the spectator, the more Spirit comes into existence. This axiom must be taken literally, for the spirit is created and exists only through personal effort.

That being the case, what are we to think of the universal endeavours of this age to make all things easy? They are simply leading to de-spiritualization. The old culture is dying out where these endeavours carry the day. It is vanishing in the great Pralaya.

YET, on the other hand, the flooding of the masses with Spirit not-understood has a fecundating effect like the floods of the Nile. The craving for knowledge of those whose hereditary substance contains little or no culture is often as great as the thirst of the desert; it is much greater than that of the hereditary culture types. I have often observed how slight the intellectual interest of the chosen representatives of Spirit appears when compared with newly awakened barbarians. The former incarnate Spirit; the latter long for it; therefore it means more to these. The circumstance that they do not know

what to do with the Spirit offered to them does not alter the fact. In order to appraise rightly the peculiar character of this period of transition, the cultural process must be looked upon as similar to the processes of nature. Nature throws milliards of germs into the world in order that a few millions should develop. Thus, today, the world is flooded with solved or suspended spiritual productions, in order that some of them should survive the chaos. There is something like nature's wisdom in this process. When dealing with the problem of irresistibly spreading theosophy I have shown in what respect the spiritual inferiority of a great part of its adepts is a favorable circumstance. Thanks to this one fact, the number of its disciples is becoming so great that the valuable qualities of theosophy have a chance of reaching the scattered few who are inwardly equal to esoteric science. The same is true of the popularization aimed at in this age. The old order of things is on the decline; the life forms of yesterday are no longer vital. If new life is to be reborn out of the old, the desert must first be flooded with waters saturated with the fragments of past cultures. Thus the desert will slowly be transformed into fruitful farming land.

IF THAT is so, must we, the representatives of the Spirit, consider it our main aim to help to bring about the great deluge? Oh no! Just as after the Flood a new creation could only set in because Noah saved a pair of every species of the old in his Ark, just so, though upon a new soil, the new cultural beginning can only proceed from what derives its existence directly from the old. All those, therefore, who have the future at

heart should more than ever remain true to the highest tradition. *And this means that we must oppose to the culture of making-all-things-easy, contrapunt-wise, as it were, a culture of taking-things-all-the-more-seriously.* Spirit exists only by being continually created anew; it is created only by the perpetual subduing of nature. And this last succeeds only by means of the greatest exertion of all the vital powers.

As yet only the few are conscious of the extent to which the course of the historic process is a phenomenon resembling that of counterpoint in music. Just *because* the masses have triumphed to an unheard-of degree for the time being, we are approaching a decidedly aristocratic epoch. Just *because* quantity alone is the decisive factor today, the qualitative will soon mean more than ever before. Just *because* the mass appears to be everything, all great decisions will soon be taken within the smallest circles. They, and they alone, as the Ark during the Flood, are the safeguards of the future.

For this reason we who are spiritual should consciously assume the counterpoint attitude to everything which is going on today. Let the culture of making-all-things-easy overspread the earth like a flood. An age whose day is past is being drowned in the deluge. We will not even try to stem the tide. Let us recognize the fact that for a long time to come everything within view, and in the first instance the state, will have to serve the process of liquidation. But at the same time let us remain proudly conscious of this other fact: that today everything depends on those who keep aloof, who are officially inconspicuous and not in view of the many. All the future is theirs.

Villiers de l'Isle Adam (or was it Baudelaire?) once dedicated a particularly fine piece of writing "to the great number," with the motivation that intelligence and number are identical. It may be that he only meant to be ironical; I for my part do not think so. In his subconscious the idea will have struggled for expression that only he whose mind is solely bent on quality really works for the good of the mass. He alone can help it to rise. But in this he can succeed only because, and to the extent that, he takes all things extremely seriously wherever his responsibility is involved.

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## *The Creation of the Best Possible World*

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IT WAS one of the most important events of all times in cultural history when man perceived that the last resort of understanding is not the reality in its existing form, but its possibility; that is to say, something which does not "exist," properly speaking, whatever its definition may be. For with this new insight the barriers of nature were in principle passed by the Spirit, and the autonomous laws of the latter, the violation of which is inconceivable because it would mean the extinction of Spirit itself, were left as the only determinations of intrinsic necessity. It is, of course, not clear from the outset whether the discovery of the concept of possibility as related to some kind of reality—a discovery we owe to Leibniz—has extended or narrowed the range of the knowable. The determinations of the possible are not qualifications of necessity, but of freedom; for the norms of the possible give infinite, though not indefinite, scope to the real, and it may be that such freedom belongs only to the thinking Spirit. From the basis of this new insight Leibniz thought he could conceive this world as the best possible world; he postulated the freedom of God and then asked the question what freedom is capable of effecting, presupposing a given subject-matter; whereas Kant, who originally set the problem in the same manner, came to see that the supposed-to-be determinations of Being really were such of the human mind. From this he inferred the ultimate impossibility to pass



by means of logic beyond the limits of what is conditioned by man. Nowadays, a more advanced critique is about to prove that the fundamental intuition of Leibniz was right, after all: there is no barrier between the human and the natural at large; the necessities of thinking, so far as they are valid, apply to the whole world of experience. And since "experience" and "world" really are convertible terms, it is not only permissible to decide *a priori* what is possible and what is not, wherever the experimental conditions of a development have been understood: whatever holds true of our Spirit must, in principle, be true of all that is akin to it in essence. As far as essential being is concerned (which, of course, experience alone decides), nothing that exists can be ultimately explained out of itself; all necessities are ultimately the effects of the possibilities inherent in freedom, whatever their momentary expressions and their ultimate conceptual definition may be. When I say freedom, I mean simply the specific way of expression of the living Spirit, essentially endowed with spontaneity as opposed to inert nature.<sup>1</sup>

Now this insight, on which I will not expatiate here, is of the utmost importance. For if necessity is an effect of the possibilities inherent in freedom—that is to say, if necessity is not the last resort where "beings" are in question—then reality in principle never means fate, but a voluntary moment of arrested motion, as it were, within the continuous flow of creation. Man is co-responsible for everything that happens in the world he can comprehend, however slight his particular responsibility may be. Up to now he has hardly become conscious of this

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the detailed elucidation and elaboration of the problem of freedom in *The Recovery of Truth*.

state of things, but unconsciously its meaning has given colour to all world-philosophies since the eighteenth century. Turning their backs upon the theodicy of the Middle Ages, the eighteenth-century philosophers made the natural laws their last resort. On superficial consideration, man ought to have felt imprisoned henceforth, for now there was no more supernatural realm in which the soul, prison-bound by nature, might find shelter. As a matter of fact, his *optimism* dates from that time; ever since, all Occidentals, with rare exceptions, whose relationship to the others resembles that of counterpoint in music, look hopefully into the future. This is due to the very fact that ever since they all instinctively interpret necessity in terms of freedom. The outlook of the Greeks was different; their *Anangke* was an arbitrary power or a thing of chance; it essentially meant restriction. Hence the profound pessimism of all profound Greeks.

This new insight does, in fact, give a new meaning to the dependence of man. If the norms of the real are in the first instance ruled by those of the possible, which, in their turn, define the way of freedom, then, on the one hand, freedom plays a much greater part in the sphere of nature than was formerly believed, and on the other hand, the difference between what is inwardly and outwardly conditioned is less fundamental. The norms of the possible are the means of expression of free will, and the norms of the real are the means of expression of the possible; hence the close connexion between will and fate and between nature and Spirit. In principle, freedom may set in wherever it likes: as soon as an intention begins to materialize into fact, it subjects itself to the norms of the pos-

sible, or else it annuls itself; and if within these norms of the possible a decision takes place, the laws of nature come into force. Wherever "essential beings" take part in the decision, the final subjection to laws is not the primal, but the ultimate state.

If at this point we return to Leibniz, we must admit that his concept of a best possible world was rightly formed; only his premise of the biblical God who planned a definite creation is open to dispute. Yet if we transfer, *mutatis mutandis*, what Leibniz said of God to man, we understand man's essence and capacities in its final depths. As human beings we *are* essentially free. But since the way of freedom has its own laws, there are only certain possibilities for each single man who starts from some particular point; and that possibility which passes into the realm of reality at once crystallizes into a necessity taking on the character of fate. Every time a determination is arrived at or a decision has been come to, a "best possible" world, in the literal sense of the word, comes into existence. Everybody may experience this fact in small things every day of his life. Considered as to their fundamental cause, our decisions are spontaneous; the fact that we are really able to choose cannot be traced back further, and this fact alone suffices to establish the empiric concept of freedom as we use it here. But as soon as a decision has been taken, a concatenation of causation sets in which, rolling on like a wheel, keeps more and more rigidly to one single direction. The Karma doctrine of the Hindoos gives a better idea of the closeness of this concatenation than our threadbare doctrine of the *raison nécessaire et suffisante*.

It is true that every moment there are new possibilities

of decision, but the course of things which have once passed from the realm of the possible into that of the real can never more be checked. Therefore it is true in the literal sense that at every moment the fate of a world is decided. All Significance is capable of manifold possibilities of expression; the moment of freedom which separates these possibilities from their realization for ever decides. It is true that in the long run, taking the sphere of morality as a special instance, much "can be repaired," in so far as a series of right decisions, setting in later, can finally very nearly give to reality the character which true discernment might have given to it from the outset. Yet the mistake of one moment can often only be repaired in thousands of years. *Now this implies that man personally forges his destiny.* It is true that the individual enters into a pre-existing concatenation of fate and is to that extent only responsible for its further course. But each given concatenation was the result of the summed-up decisions of former human beings, so that all necessity is *ultimately* referable to free choice; all fate thus appears originally dependent on personal and inward events. And this is true quite independently of the material and quantitative superiority of nature and inherent Karma; for in principle Spirit is their master. *One* right thought may move mountains. If Spirit is not practically the master, this simply proves that it has not exercised its inherent powers and has left undone what it could have done. But metaphysically such omissions mean actions as spontaneous as creative acts. Where the individual bears no responsibility, humanity does in any case; this is true of all occurrences belonging to history; that is to say, of all that are not of purely

natural or cosmic origin.<sup>1</sup> Thus, if the recognition of the fact that reality is not the last resort is followed out far enough, it leads to an immense increase of the significance of vital reality. Our universe need not be what it is; there is no *Anangke* compelling it from without. If the world is what it is, this is ultimately the result of free decision. But now we can ascend to a higher point of vantage. What is true of man is true in so far as he is an "essential being." The same applies to *all* living beings. The attributes of the Spirit, as far as they can be opposed to nature, are one and all attributes of life as such. To that extent freedom, too, is a fundamental quality of all living beings, however inconsiderable may be its degree with most organisms, viewed from the standpoint of man; the outward appearance of each and all is ruled by an inner principle acting spontaneously from within. Thus, the protozoa, too, must be considered as essentially free, however scanty the possibilities of choice practically open to them may be; they, too, are responsible for the universal course of events.<sup>2</sup> As this provides the proof that there are lower degrees of freedom than we enjoy, and as nature appears more homogeneous the deeper our understanding penetrates, there is no reason why speculation should not postulate higher degrees of freedom as well. Our own last resorts, the specific quality of the universe and cosmic destiny, may well be the results of decisions arrived at by higher

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<sup>1</sup> Compare my detailed analysis of the meaning of history in the chapter, "The Symbolism of History," in this book, and the chapter, "History a Tragedy," in *The Recovery of Truth*.

<sup>2</sup> I have fully elaborated the trend of thought only sketched here in the lectures on "The Problem of Freedom," in *The Recovery of Truth*.



beings æons ago. Foraminifera have piled up dolomite mountains, thoughts have forced the power of lightning into human service. The schematism of the present world-process rather seems to prove that its meaning is that of a routine of a final stage.

FROM the fact that nature is not the last court of appeal of the Spirit, appearance derives an importance it would not have if Spirit could not conceive a Beyond to it. The existing circumstances have a profound significance for the very reason that everything might very well be different from what it is. One should think that, since the plane of existence circumscribed by the concept of the possible was discovered, the reality depending on us human beings should have found an increasingly deepening background; it ought to have expressed more and more responsibility. As a matter of fact, this is true only in the most external sense. The reason is that Leibniz himself has worked out his insight only on the plane of the association of ideas—of mathematics and logic—and that after him followed the one-sided scientific era, which had little understanding for living reality. The possible, profoundly conceived, is the sphere of immediate expression of freedom; hence it follows that in principle we have the same power as God the Creator: to create human beings according to our own image and to the image of our ideals, and consciously to direct the course of fate. This ought to have been the one care of the spiritually awakened, for, since nature inevitably completes what Spirit starts, and the human world of tomorrow develops according to foundations laid by the life of today, all progressive aspirations

should have been directed to conscious formation of Being. Even where consciousness does not determine, even where impulses and chance are ruling forces, experience proves that the external circumstances always reflect in large outlines inner conditions, and that nature's routine only crystallizes what originated in the free impulse of life; if an existing fate has always to be submitted to, it need hardly ever have come into existence. For we are not only superior to nature taken in the spatially external sense: the soul, too, belongs to nature; the significance of its laws is essentially the same as that of the laws of the external world.<sup>1</sup> If our spirit, in principle, is master of the world, then it is certainly possible to form the soul in such a manner that finally all fate which is not of a cosmic nature should be directed by the Spirit. By this process not only a world which is the best possible for the given moment would be developed in the long run, but an absolutely and objectively best possible world.

This recognition should evidently have become determining. But instead, the sophisticated European took the concept of possibility only in the abstract sense and elaborated it only in the direction of abstractions. The results were what they could not help being, considering the absolute obedience of nature: the *a priori* sciences developed wonderfully; one mathematical possibility after another was elaborated; schooled by the exercise of the former, scientific imagination brought forth one invention after another; external conditions became in-

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<sup>1</sup> Compare my *Travel Diary* by looking up "Soul" and "Ego" in the index. Further details on the same ideas are to be found in the cycles of lectures of the School of Wisdom in this volume.

creasingly perfect. But life itself did not become the expression of deeper understanding; life only more and more lacked colour and form.

Things had to take this course for the very reason that we are ultimately free. We develop in the direction we have chosen. If all our powers are focused in the world of imagination, if our consciousness is entirely centred there, all possibilities will find the realization that can be realized within this sphere, but we ourselves will not be influenced by these rich possibilities externalized by the process, and fate will take its course independently of our volition.<sup>1</sup> And what is even worse, our being does not only not expand and change, thanks to what we understand—all true self-development, and finally even the maintenance of the results of former developments, stop, because now all vital forces exhaust themselves within the world of imagination. This is the reason why personal life has become more and more inadequate since the eighteenth century, a fact reflected in the destinies of the nations which are assuming an increasingly mechanical quality. The profundity of the Middle Ages, its wealth of colour, the deep meaning of its history, were due to the fact that then every spiritual possibility comprehended as such found living representatives. One might speak of an essential progress that should have taken place then only if the deeper understanding obtained by the liberation of the mind had in its turn found living incarnations. If that had been the case, full-grown "men who know" would have arisen, just as formerly there have been "believers"; an equally rich

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<sup>1</sup> I have given an elaboration of this idea in my essay, "*Erscheinungswelt und Geistesmacht*," in *Philosophie als Kunst*.

and profound race of men would have replaced the old, as the expression of a higher state of being to the extent that external happenings would have appeared determined to a higher degree by the Spirit.

This has not been the case; on the contrary, man has become increasingly futile and powerless. His mind became more and more scholarly; it looked at the world only as though it were a written book he had to review; it looked on each phenomenon more and more as on one possibility among others; the understanding of the unique significance of the unique, of the real as such and as a creation of free decision, faded more and more. And thus also the capacity to set a vital reality into the world and to form the latter from within instead of from the outside, disappeared. Thus, what had once been life and faith changed more and more into theories and programs. Only the types of being formed in previous epochs continued to understand the importance of unique configurations; they were the only ones who still consciously embodied a fate. But since the specific character of their being was superannuated on the lines of mental development, they could no more serve as exemplars or be pace-makers; they had no influence upon destiny at large. Today, thought has almost entirely lost its direct power over life. A faith or a change of faith now means as little in relation to life as once they meant much—I entirely set aside the more momentous question of convictions and change of convictions. Inward decisions hardly take place any more, because they are physiologically unattainable to the Spirit grown superficial. Thus the train of thoughts originating from the discovery of a real Beyond of experimental reality has led to the very opposite of what it might and should

have led to: to a levelling instead of to a deepening of human being, and finally to a mechanization of Destiny.

IT IS true that humanity is becoming very much conscious of its inadequacy. The World War, in particular, has compelled the majority to think by tearing away the mask which hid the true state of its soul—a state of such barbarism as never was revealed before in the history of civilized Europe. But as the evil is not taken at the root, because its causes are only half understood, remedies are applied which cannot even serve as palliatives. We make no progress for the very reason that our ideals are not vital powers but exteriorized programs. Yet these very programs are expected to mean salvation; where life is languishing, productions of the imagination are being doctored. According to the ideas of the majority, life will become perfect as soon as external conditions are perfect. The idea of what “should” be is supposed to connect the one with the other.

Modern man’s utter ignorance of his own true being is conclusively illustrated by his idea that an intellectually recognized “should” leads to inner regeneration. It is true that beyond the empiric will there is a sphere of motivation within the soul, the impulses of which are of an apparently impersonal nature, since they are directed to absolute values; the compelling influence they have on us, philosophical terminology calls the reality-that-should-be, analogously to external compulsion or duty in human life. But a worse analogy has seldom been determining on the plane of thought. The ethical commandments belong to a still deeper range of Being than the primal desires; thus they belong not to an



impersonal but to a super-personal order. It is the reverse in the case of external duties, and these alone play a part in programs and the like. What "should" be in that sense as opposed to what one wishes to do is a product of imagination lacking all vitality and all direct relation with life's centre. It is not true that a "should" of that kind can be transmuted into vital volition by a sense of duty, self-sacrificing determination and resignation, although in a purely formal sense these may very well have their origin in the deepest essence: there can be no vital connexion between a program and the creative decision of will; no man was ever renewed or regenerated that way, however much he may otherwise profit from asceticism. This, then, is the fundamental psychological reason why no modern individual appears as formed inwardly by his world-philosophy: nowhere does a spiritual possibility appear inbuilt from the sphere of imagination into that of reality, as a meaning expresses itself in the adequate sentences, words and letters. And accordingly, even the most earnest desire of renewal cannot lead to new forms of life; the metaphysical and psychological misunderstanding precludes the possibility. Whoever has understood this fact is inclined to laugh bitterly when witnessing the way in which regeneration is everywhere being attempted and promoted. When a program has been recognized as satisfactory from the intellectual point of view, unions and associations are founded in order to realize it from without. But since it lacks the basis of a pre-existing inner determination, it is absolutely powerless and nothing is bettered or changed by its means. Life rolls on on the rails of necessity laid down by the last inner decision, and this generally took place far down in the past of the race. "Duty" as popu-

larly understood lacks vitality altogether; in order to effect essential things it must not only be reincarnated in the will as such, but in the free agent in question. If one adheres to the belief in the immediate power of what "should" be, one is irresistibly led to postulate terrorism; in this respect, as in many others, Bolshevism appears originally profounder than all liberal reformism. Bolshevism asserts that violence is necessary as a first step; in the course of time, what was the result of compulsion automatically changes into individual volition, as soon as corresponding habits have been formed; Christianity, too, acted according to the same tactics for long centuries. Externally much may certainly be accomplished that way; wherever the external side of life only is in question, as in the case of all purely sociological formations, violence will be recognized as an effective means to the end down to the last day of the world. But precisely the history of Christianity provides the proof of the fact that this is true only of the external side of life. In our outward attitude we are surely Christians, all of us. But inwardly the great majority of present-day Westerners are astonishingly similar to their pagan ancestors. As far as there are any true Christians, their "being" is not the result of coercive measures of public authorities and acceptance of certain dogmata, but of the mysterious working of the example of Christ and His followers from St. John to St. Paul and down to the simple children of God, of whose existence the wide world knows nothing. Essential being only acts directly upon being.<sup>1</sup> As long as a number of live individuals, be it ever so small, does not stand for a program in the

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<sup>1</sup> This thought is expatiated upon in the last cycle of this book.

sense that it means only the external expression of a *vitaly existing inner state*, it will remain powerless.

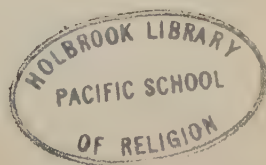
It cannot be fairly said that any reformers have as yet adopted this attitude. I know of no socialist who really wills what he advocates; if he comes into power, he very soon lives and acts in the spirit of the very life-philosophy he formerly opposed and for that matter may go on opposing outwardly. If only a few thousand socialists were inwardly formed by their world-philosophy, then, and then only, the predicted socialistic era might be considered as close at hand.

AT THIS point we will return to our earlier considerations. Every moment we are free to choose; once we have chosen, we are bound by our decision. But as today the great majority of us have not chosen personally at all, only old forces beneath the mask of some kind of new program are at work until further notice: in Russia, on the one hand, those which created Moscovian centralism; on the other hand, the anarchistically primordial forces which have always opposed all state-authority; in Germany, they are the forces of the pre- and post-Bismarckian epochs which counterpoise each other; but I know of none among the latter which are different in kind from those characterizing the expiring nineteenth century; in France, these forces are principally those which came to life in the thirties and forties of the last century. To use the Hindoo terminology, it is altogether an old Karma which is being worked out. Whatever imagines to be building up afresh is in reality in the very act of destroying: the headlong reforms of the first post-war years will not be able to do more than finally bury the world of yesterday. It is true that in-

tellect anticipates more possibilities than it ever did before; everywhere there is a shower of utopias. But the latter will not crystallize into realities *unless a moment of arrest, as it were, has taken place within the activity of the spiritual forces, thanks to which one possibility among others may suddenly crystallize into full reality*. Only then will something essentially new enter life as a power.

This realization can only take place in the body of a personality. What man is, and not what he represents, decides ultimately; for only a personally live man is a possible immediate expression of Vital Essence. Since Significance only realizes itself from the inside to the outside, and can only thus be realized, an event requiring personal initiative in any case, it really is a matter of course that the necessary "pose of arrest" cannot be assumed by anything impersonal. Only that which personally belongs to the plane of Being is superior to nature, only that can change it and ultimately work out a destiny. Nothing external is capable of this—no single force, no imagination, no program, for as formations all these belong to the sphere of nature. But wherever Being has found adequate expression in the body of a phenomenon, this body is animated by a force of metaphysical origin. The exponent of this force is personality. This single consideration explains the ultimate and decisive significance of personality on every plane and the hopelessness of all endeavours to replace it by institutions and mass-effects; this one consideration explains why it is possible at all times, and even in times of ostensible mass-rule, to determine the curves of national development by a small number of personal co-ordinates. Only the real facts of the significance of personality are

generally misunderstood: the great man as such is thought to be important, his independence, his bearing and essential being are thought sufficient to consecrate him as a guide and an innovator; at this very moment we are witnessing a resurrection of antique hero-worship within the circle around Stefan George in Germany, not to mention the call for the strong man in the sense of the boxer type. Since man alone can work innovation and only the great man possesses the inner power to carry the point, it is really self-evident, as shown clearly in the above, that historically human greatness ultimately decides. Only, this greatness as such is a means of embodiment and not the essence. The emphasis lies on the *spirit* which expresses itself by its means. Where a great man embodies an evil spirit, he is harmful; it is not permissible to provide one common denominator for gods and fiends, for the seer and the blind. A great man is a promotive power on the plane of understanding and progress only where he is animated by profounder knowledge and purer volition than his contemporaries, and therefore realizes the necessary new spiritual contents in the shape of life. Everything depends on these spiritual contents. From the historical and metaphysical point of view even the greatest individual is nothing but a symbol and an exponent; in other words, in principle, humanity does not need them in order to progress. What it needs is only the embodiment of the necessary type of Being at the right moment; and from this point of view the fact that only the great personality succeeds in doing this is simply a matter of technique. It must be repeated: what makes of the great man an innovator and a landmark in the history of mankind is *not* his greatness as such; it is the circumstance that at a given





moment his particular form represents the realization of the possibilities struggling for utterance within the psychic and spiritual world. The greatest may simply be an anachronism, an archaism or an exotism, the most immortal may not be significant for any special historical hour. Only the man who gives a new impulse to life from a deeper range of insight, not standing aloof, but in the centre of the historical process, creates Being and Destiny.

Now we have concreted our problem so as to give it a really practical issue. When the question of creating a best possible world arises, the conditions and necessities of the moment cannot be disregarded. In the realm of the possible the idea may live as an eternal Reality. But as soon as it is a question of realization in this world, then the following is true: only that idea can originate a progressive movement the embodiment of which is a result of the co-operation of all the empiric forces at work at the time, and this not only generally speaking, but that they have so co-operated with it that they serve as necessary means of expression of the ideal. Under all circumstances these empiric forces determine actual life; the new spiritual Significance to be incarnated in it can never become a power if the means of expression at hand remain unused. Only such eternal values can attain temporal power which are expressed in the language of the *Zeitgeist*. Thus it is true that Luther became a historic power because in him an existing possibility developed into full-grown reality; had it not been thus, he would have remained without Significance. But from the practical point of view we must say: he succeeded only because he was not an anachronism; in him spiritual life took on a shape in accordance with the laws of

philogeny. In principle, a man like him had to come to power, because his type was *due*. A type of man who has no relationship to temporal reality never appears as a historical force, whatever may be his intrinsic value, because there are no living forces at hand which could create for him a perdurable body.

THUS all depends not only on the fact that a "moment of arrest," as we call it, takes place in the workings of the possible, but on its *specific character*. Only a spirit concentrating the material forces of the age into a new and more developed body of meaning can become significant in the good sense. But here we can ask a further question: *when* does innovation mean true progress?—Then and only then does it mean true progress when the new form expresses a wider and profounder understanding. All other changes merely add a certain wealth to life; the former alone leads upward.

Man's capacity to comprehend the possible as such and to understand it as the direct body of free essence makes it possible for him to judge of how far an innovation does or does not mean progress. The pure historian naturally does not proceed beyond the idea which Leibniz advocated with respect to God: that everything in existence is for the moment the best possible thing—an idea which even Hegel, the metaphysician, took up in so far as he thought every kind of philosophy justified as a necessary stage in the progression of understanding; if existence as such is considered to be the last resort, then the idea is true. But we had precisely come to understand that existence as such is *not* the last resort; it is in its turn subject to the laws of pure freedom, which only finds expression in the empiric world as a meaning is ex-

pressed in definitely articulated language. As far as Luther is concerned we may say this: in spite of his limitations due to his time he might have reached deeper insight; and he would have done so if, instead of keeping to the letter of the Bible, he had understood its meaning more profoundly. He would even then have suited the expression of his insight to his time; the fate of yesterday always provides the material for tomorrow's body of freedom. But his insight would have become fruitful to a much higher degree.

Proceeding from the concept of temporal dependence, it is particularly easy to get an understanding of the essential meaning of eternal truth, the comprehension and realization of which is the final goal. One may be modern only, or in harmony with the spirit of the age without this circumstance meaning short-livedness. The trivial example provided by the comparison between great and small tailors illustrates and explains this difference particularly well. Great tailors are somehow independent of the changes of fashion, although they never fashion anything unmodern. How is this?—The man who lays all emphasis on the means of expression of the moment is nothing but modern. Dadaists and Futurists, for instance, lay the stress wrongly; they are less eccentric than too superficially temporal in so far as they do not attach the greatest importance to the significance of the new will to form, which would be capable as such as well of an up-to-date as of an eternally valid expression; for this reason they must continually outlive themselves; and it argues not against, but rather in favor of, the metaphysical consciousness of the young of the immediate post-war period that they did not aim in principle at the creation of lasting values; they even fixed a limit

of age for each style—not *despite*, but *because* evolution soon transcends that limit. A *perfect* metaphysical consciousness judges differently. Out of the very realization that all forms are temporally conditioned, it aspires towards eternal values; these values are recognized in each case when the Significance as such is perceived, and all the emphasis is laid upon it. This is the secret of all artists whose works never grow obsolete. This is the ultimate reason of the duration of all religions and philosophies, each of which would otherwise soon outlive itself. To all those who really know, concepts and dogmata never mean more than means of expression; for them consciousness originally lies beyond the plane of name and form. And the more this was the case, the deeper and longer did their influence work. Jajnavalkya, Buddha, Lao-tse will never die as influences, although they, too, expressed their knowledge according to the spirit of their age, whereas Luther, in spite of all his greatness, was in many respects only “modern”; that is the reason why his star is paling today. The world which he created was the best possible from the point of view of his inner limitations only.

*Yet the world could at any moment become the best possible world.* This truth, which we have already realized at the beginning of our investigations, we can now endow with so palpable a body that it will appear as an innovation productive of action. There is a reality beyond empirical existence, a deeper reality to which we essentially belong and from which all our decisions originate; all nature, all Destiny means a congealing of what was originally freedom. Viewed in great outlines, all Destiny is inwardly conditioned. Earthly power depends on the degree of clear perception of the material

force at stake and the utilization of the latter on the plane of religion and philosophy as much as on that of politics, for only what is in harmony with the spirit of the age can influence time; the depth of Sense-perception expressed in the temporal formation is the measure of its eternal value. If this is so, then the hour has come to wrest the last sovereign rights from the hands of Moira (the Greek idea of Fate). Since the days of the Greeks much has already been wrung from her; she can attempt to regain her old position only in such times as the years of the Great War, in which an unheard-of degree of spiritual and moral incapacity, an almost unorganic lack of initiative on the Karmic basis of a century of increasing mechanization was revealed; Moira has actually brought things to such a pass that latter-day history resembles the primordial state of the fights of the Titans. It is all the more important now that Jove should win. We must now seize from within with the utmost understanding what up to now befell man outwardly. We must transform all happenings into personal destiny and include all destiny in the realm of personal freedom. Not in the sense of mere *amor fati*, of acquiescence, but in the sense of conquering it. For if it is true that the Spirit as yet only rules a small part of the outer world, it can gradually bring it entirely under subjection. The world is not only externally but also internally a coherent whole. If there is nothing external which man cannot conquer, so as to make of it a symbol of the inward, then there is no fate that free will cannot transform into its means of expression.

Therefore it is high time to put an end to the wonted glib talk about Fate, about Divine Grace and Dispensation. There is no Fate but that which is Karmically



crystallized from the summing-up of free determinations. There is no Grace which is not vouchsafed at the right moment, no Dispensation which cannot be anticipated by understanding of Significance. All that is essential is effected "spontaneously" out of cosmic primal volition. It is self-evident that this can never be manufactured, it must grow; and whatever grows, develops "spontaneously" according to our human concepts. But one should not stop at the self-evident contrast between what is grown and what is manufactured (*Gewächs und Gemächte*): in the realm of spontaneity *personal* consciousness can erect its throne, and then the powers of the universe obey that consciousness.

This is the only sensible way of putting the problem. Many consider it a desecration that they should draw cosmic becoming into the sphere of their activities: in reality it means self-profanation of the human being, if it does not will the completion of its destiny. No dependence on externals should be recognized as final; it is truly unworthy of man simply to wait passively until the man comes who meets the needs of the times. The spirit is not only capable of anticipating what is needful, it can practically prepare the road for it. In this case, too, things finally come about "of their own accord," but very much sooner and quicker. And above all, the right man who then appears will be the right man in a truer sense than he ever was before.

THIS is the decisive point. Luther did not need to stop at such inadequate insight; Napoleon might have put the forces of the *Zeitgeist* to better use; Nietzsche might have had more positive influence; and on the other hand, those who followed the leaders need

never have followed ineffective or misleading stars. The "right" man need never have remained unrecognized or powerless. It is not the great man as such who matters—talents there always are, and everybody involuntarily speaks the language of the *Zeitgeist*—but the cultural type according to which he took shape, and this depends on will and understanding. *What is needful is the mental anticipation and practical breeding of the cultural type which corresponds to the highest possibilities of the age.* In this respect individual gifts are of no importance whatsoever; on the other hand, even in the case of the highest talents this cultural type ultimately decides whether a man is significant from the point of view of progress. It is true that the type also grows spontaneously in the long run, but how often have the centuries elapsed unused, thanks to misunderstanding! How many choice spirits do not achieve what they might within themselves and for the world! How many take their bearings by false ideals! And how much more perfect in many cases the cultural type might have become if profounder insight had been at work!

Up to now far too much has been left to chance; up to now far too much superstition has been mixed up with the idea of the great man. Henceforth this must change. The degree of progression of a class of men does not depend on the talents of its individual members, but on the determinant spiritual level which represents as impersonal a temporal entity as the physical species and is as determinant in the sphere of personality as the latter. *This level can be created by conscious culture.* We are not only able to decide *that* a faith is needed, but also *what* faith is necessary; not only *that*

a personality must come to the fore, but also *what* its character must be, if it is to start a progressive movement. Thus, at this most important turning-point in history we are in a position, thanks to the newly-attained degree of Sense-perception, to direct to the cultivation of the individual and of humanity at large the same forces which up to now exhausted themselves within the world of imagination and created inventions there, which, being something external, could not influence man inwardly. What should be done now is to make our freedom act upon the *originators* of our human world. If this is done consistently, the old Karma will soon be worked out and a new Karma will be put in motion; nature will appear more and more determined by Spirit, Fate will take a given direction set by man. Until, finally, a best possible world has been created, a best possible world not only in the empirical sense, but in the sense of the profoundest significance.

I will say nothing about the nature of the education needed in order to create the new human level in question; for this the last cycle of lectures in this book should be read. My present intention is to lead to a general understanding of the true goal towards which we should all aspire, and to the hopeful thought that this goal is attainable. There is only one question which may arise in many minds and which I will answer at once. Everywhere progress originates from individuals, not from the many or the masses, for the simple reason that in every case somebody was the first. Now where it is a question of the formation of personality, the influence of the single and the unique can only go on working thus, that an increasing number of persons attune themselves to him and surrender to the influence

of his being. Time plays only a very slight part in this process of attuning. This is not only true in the sense that the inner decisions originate in the eternal and cannot therefore be understood as belonging to any chain of temporal causation; this is a well-known fact on the plane of religious conversion: it is of little importance how long the types, the changes of which divide all human progress into musical phrases, are set forth. Phenomena of decisive cultural importance have never lasted long. The zenith of Greek culture was past in a few short centuries, and yet it determines the type of half the globe even today; the culminating points of all were embodied in great individuals, and all life is short. But this trend of thought leads us to realize a circumstance which renders time even less important: within the life of the individual, too, only short periods, often moments only, were of real importance for humanity at large. Jesus is said to have taught three years; His life before that period is of no importance. The influence worked by the most long-lived of the great generally resulted from short moments of inspiration. Moreover, at all times the suggestions of a moment have had the most lasting effect. What does that imply? It means that only that moment of *freedom* is creative in which a possibility is just being realized; that is to say, the moment of transition between the "not yet" of the possibility and that routine which is the death of freedom. Man is free only at the moment of his decision; as soon as he has decided, he is bound. As only like acts upon like, only the moment or the period of freedom, which as such is motion, is able to set a movement going and to go on acting as an accelerating impulse. Thus there is a profound significance in

the fact that mythology reduces the creative influence of all the determinant great ones to the effects of a few scenes of their lives. For the same reason, nothing of decisive importance as such *can* ever become routine.

It is therefore in the nature of things and not to be considered as tragic, that no Church has preserved its original impulse; that the original form of every progressive movement is very soon superannuated and that every innovator, who does not die early, soon outlives himself or even leads himself *ad absurdum*. What matters ultimately, in the case of what we called a "moment of arrested motion" within the flux of events bringing about progress, is the fact *that it actually took place*. Everything else matters little. For this reason, neither the number nor the long-livedness of the representatives of the new type of man, the creation of which is the most important task of our age, is of any great significance. Their effect will depend upon their inner dynamism, upon the inner rhythm of their being. It is in the nature of things that it will communicate itself to others, that it will touch an ever increasing number of souls. Soon, when a new and deeper basic note will have been struck, no ear will hear it should the melody of life remain attuned to the old. But the moment it is struck is more important than the time of its sounding. Dynamism alone is creative. Routine never creates anything. Therefore it may truly be said of all essential things: temporal death is the very guaranty of immortality.



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## I. *The New Union Between Mind and Soul*

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THE latest European civilization has led itself *ad absurdum*. The great intellectual progress it can boast of has been achieved to the detriment of soul-life, and if before the beginning of the World War there was still some hope of the latter regaining the upper hand in time, it is evident today that we are destined to pass through what may prove to be the darkest abyss in European history, in order to ascend in the sense of Schiller's "the humane in man" to even something of the height on which our nearest forebears stood; for the soul is disintegrated to a degree unheard of since the end of Antiquity; and it is the character of the soul which determines man's level. What is the ultimate meaning of the facts—to point out an example familiar to all—that on all sides the World War was carried on with a ruthlessness and recklessness never known before; that an unheard-of amount of hate and other dregs of the soul were poured forth over the world; that the fight of the nations ended in the most disgusting profit-hunting ever witnessed?—It means that the mass of European humanity has lost all soul-structure. The intellect which has emancipated itself more and more since the eighteenth century has gradually shown most of the psychic organs and formations, which inwardly formed man, to be creations of prejudice and accident, and has thereby weakened and finally dead-

ened them. In exact correspondence with the aims of Russian nihilism, only the primitive and natural necessities and, to a less degree, the eternally valuable in an abstractly absolutistic form can still be considered as undiseased; but these two regions do not furnish the basis for a possible culture, because the former lies beneath and the latter above the plane of culture. Accordingly, nothing of what constitutes European civilization in its higher sense need continue, since the belief in all which was developed in the course of history is lost; and without faith there is no psychic reality. Monarchy was done away with in a trice, first in Russia, then in Germany, because every belief in its right to exist had disappeared: in the same sense all historic forms of existence are threatened, from the contents of religious faith and the concepts of honor and right down to the social institutions. Most of the spiritual and psychic formations which had up to that time held together the peoples and groups, survived the French Revolution; this is why the intellectual progress it represented has, on the whole, been able to achieve positive effects. But today the soul of the masses in its relation to the ties connecting it with the past is so complete a *tabula rasa* as no philosophical empiricist of the seventeenth century ever assumed as a basis for man's thinking processes; it is a formation so completely amorphous as no protozoön has ever been. Everywhere individual intellect is considered as the last resort; whatever it does not recognize as valid, is declared null and void; and it does not occur to anybody that the intellect may possibly be shortsighted or even blind. Therefore, the continuance of all that depends on the arbitrary de-

cisions of man has become doubtful. One need only picture to oneself what it would mean if the Bolshevik intention to annul all government loans, all equivalents of economic values in general, were carried into effect simultaneously all over the world: it would mean that all rights of property and everything connected with them would *really* be destroyed, for they ultimately depend upon a human postulate and can therefore be abolished as such and must disappear from the phenomenal world as though they had never existed, as soon as faith and confidence which kept them within this world are lost. In that case the structure of economic life would be literally pulled down. Theoretically, this is quite within the range of possibilities; from the theoretical point of view, all formations ultimately depending on consciousness might thus be declared null and void; that is to say, not only institutions like marriage, social hierarchy and the like, but even the mere differences in quality between human beings, since such differences must be recognized if they are to act creatively; for all these formations have a supporting framework of inner ties; that is to say, of prejudices which the intellect need not accept. Practically, the situation is different, because physiologically the intellect is not the last resort. Most of what the intellect discards as mere prejudice is in its essence (not in the momentary and therefore transitory expression) so deeply connected with the very basis of life, that in the long run it always regains its validity. But on the other hand, the intellect can easily destroy a world. And we have proceeded rather far in that direction. Now this is the truly critical point: if no effectual counter movement sets in, we shall inevitably go a good deal further

in that same direction, because whatever may actually happen, intellect does not see in destruction its final goal. This very same intellect which is destroying all prejudices is, at the same time, busy creating on and out of the ruins of these prejudices ideal images of a future state of indubitable beauty. This is, indeed, the decisive point: the very same who threaten to bury culture, really, on the other hand, confess to higher ideals than did the past. And they can do so because for them pure reason means the last resort, because revolutionized humanity looks at reality from the point of view of the mathematician, as it were. It has as little idea of the primary importance of the empiric world as the latter, for whom definitions create reality and  $n$ -dimensional spaces are as real as the space we perceive with our eyes. This makes it very easy for the humanity in question to erect ideal constructions within the realm of abstract possibilities; nothing can prevent it from proclaiming the highest ideals as directly attainable, nor from asserting light-heartedly that it will straightway bring down the Kingdom of Heaven. And it actually can visualize this "Kingdom of Heaven" much better than any worldly-wise empiricist and relativist. Bolshevism also promises paradise in its own way, and its ideals are undoubtedly high, higher than the ideals of its opponents. Hence its tremendous power of attraction.

Now it is true that again and again experience goes to prove that absolute ideals stand the pragmatic test least of all on earth, and that he who would make angels of men, or takes them as such, makes downright devils of them. But what does a mathematician care about reality?—There can be no hope of an improvement of

our present state so long as mankind does not realize once more that something different from intellect and intellectual constructions really determines the configuration of life; that it is the fixed character of the soul which decides. The terrible mistake of this age, to express it in one sentence, was this: that it has applied the postulate of complete liberty the intellect is justified in making, that finest achievement of the eighteenth century, to the soul-life. Thereby ignoring the fact that the essential freedom of man requires entirely different conditions in order to be expressed by this medium; that only the organized, not the amorphous soul, can be free.

THUS Western humanity is irresistibly relapsing from the cosmos into chaos. And it cannot be otherwise, for the simple reason that the world of the soul is disintegrated or in the process of disintegration. The World War was carried on according to the definition that war is war ( $a=a$ ) from a purely military point of view and with no regard for anything but the military issue (that is to say, in an ideal way from the point of view of pure intellect); the result is that this war has bestialized humanity as no war did before, because the simply intellectual form, the only framework for the workings of the mind and the soul there was, made it impossible to control the unchained passions of the nations. Moreover, the great revolutions of the first post-war years were begun in expectation of the millennium: everything should and would become better, nay perfect. But as a matter of fact, very soon a fight of all against all on the most inferior plane of nature set in; a fight which appears much more antediluvian



than the Battle of Titans as recorded in the myths. The ideals certainly were high ideals, but all psychic formations which might have established a concrete relationship with life as it really is, being destroyed, there remained no barriers whatsoever against ever watchful inferior nature, and the ideals were either forgotten or else they lacked all power to work practical effects. Today we are living in a period of irresistibly increasing barbarism. Just as *form* essentially makes the organism, just so an adequate form is the primary premise of every higher state of life. For what appears to be mere prejudice from the intellectual point of view and very often really is a prejudice, is, on the other hand, the very body of soul-life; wherever its effect has proved favourable it must be considered as the best possible body, until a deeper perception of Significance makes it possible to give the spiritual content a higher kind of body. Today there are a great many formations, but there is not one universally recognized form for the life of the soul; there are millions who fanatically adhere to some kind of world-philosophy, but the life of very few among them has been shaped by the content of their faith. This state of things is illustrated with appalling clarity by European socialism in particular: the overwhelming majority of its disciples shows less social feeling than its most narrow-minded opponents; there is no doubt that it is the socialistic world—that is to say, the world professing the ideal of solidarity in the widest sense of the word—which reveals the most boundless egoism. The fact is that there are no more checks to be relied upon, no dogmata, no articles of faith, no ideas of honor. And since only the most highly developed soul can attain

perfection without "name and form," this makes for an unheard-of decline of all soul-life.

What is there to be done?—Everywhere, reactionary movements are setting in. Many of the best are endeavouring to restore the former conditions, be it on the political, the religious or the ethical plane, because they see clearly that the pristine conditions were better than the present state of things. But these endeavours imply a misunderstanding for two reasons. Firstly, many of the old life-forms are so thoroughly dead, that a revival appears out of the question. And very many of the life-forms which have been temporarily done away with, but which might, in principle, be revived, as their vitality is not yet exhausted, will not be revived, as a matter of fact, because too much time will elapse before their possible resurrection. In the Venice of 1812 the Queen of the Seas was hardly remembered; whatever has happened to a person before the fourteenth year of his life means little to him; thus the consequences of a revolution which was a mere accident in its day easily become self-evident premises of later life. This is true not only of political revolutions, but of entire epochs of cultural change.—But, secondly, a restoration of the former state of things would not succeed, for the simple reason that within its own domain the intellect *is absolutely right* in its condemnation of the pristine conditions, as well as in the essence of what it positively strives for. Intellectually we really do see more clearly and further than our forebears; the ideals emancipated intellect sets forth as postulates are undoubtedly high ideals and whoever takes theory alone into consideration must admit that the progressionists do fight for progress. The reason why they do not ac-

tually bring it about does not lie in their programs, but in other circumstances which are beyond the intellectual sphere. Therefore, whoever attempts to restore a former state is obviously mistaken in the way he posits the problem. If a given form of soul-life partly based on spiritual blindness really was better than latter-day lack of form, it does not necessarily follow that the former ought to be restored. What really follows is this: *that the component parts of the inner man must unite to create a new form of beauty, once the pristine harmony is destroyed.* When the intellect has disintegrated one soul-form, a new one must be created out of broader and profounder understanding. The ideal would be a perfect soul-life corresponding to perfect knowledge; that is to say, a life not devoid of prejudices, but with prejudices which are all of them accordant with truth. This, indeed, is the true task. *A new union between mind and soul is what we need.* A union which should establish a new equilibrium between the various component parts of man; and this synthesis should be ruled not by the most backward, but by the most developed part.

IT IS all the more difficult to unify the various component parts of man, the more one of the parts predominates. History bears out this truth throughout. The reason why the Slavs, whose general endowment is by far the richest of all the European races, find it so difficult to attain cultural perfection is that with them the emotional qualities predominate over the others to such an extent that their souls are fluid, as it were, and this circumstance makes them almost incapable of any fixation. Theoretically speaking, European humanity

ought one day to find its highest expression in the Slav, since the emotions are the most direct means of expression of man; yet practically this will not come to pass before centuries of education and tradition have somewhat stabilized and solidified the Slavic soul. Nevertheless, compared to intellectual hypertrophy the predominance of emotional life is the lesser evil. The intellect lacks every necessary relationship to the totality of life; it is essentially disintegrating and innovating, the born enemy of solid form not originating in the intellect. Thus the Greeks have achieved no exemplary state of any duration, in spite of their ideal of *Kalokagathia*, just because of their wonderful intellectual gifts which surpassed all the rest of the component parts of their being. It is true that for a short space of time they succeeded in a unique synthesis between physical and mental perfection never repeated before or since, but the Greek *soul* was always deficient, and very soon the ideal Hellene changed into the swindling *Græculus*. None of the modern nations possesses the other endowments of the Greek. But today the same circumstance which ruined them characterizes all who belong to the Occidental sphere of culture, owing to the objective progress in knowledge: intellect preponderates, and it preponderates even to an extent it never did before; and at the same time the souls of the majority are not only less developed than they ever were in earlier days—consciously, no one even thinks today of developing the soul. Thus it can happen that ingenuous men or women ask questions of the kind the wife of a Bolshevik leader once put to a Baltic noblewoman: how it was that most of those who professed the right sort of life-philosophy were bad, and so many professing wrong or superan-

nuated ideas were good. Nobility of mind and culture in general are essentially qualities of the soul, and not of pure intellect; that is to say, they are qualities of complete man; they assert themselves in his way of expressing his passions, his checks, volitions, emotions, and decisions. The postulates which apply to these are identical with the postulates applying to works of art: each component element must depend on the whole for its specific place and importance; in this connexion the æsthetic point of view can be applied even to ethical qualities. Hence the immense importance of *old* culture, which is again and again brought into most cruel evidence not only on the plane of beautiful form, but also of noble-mindedness. Within the old cultural ranks, as far as they are not degenerated, nobler souls grow up than among the people at large, often though the latter may prove intellectually superior, because only tradition, imparted to the very atmosphere of the nursery and acting as a sovereign claim during the decisive years of development, achieves an organization of the psyche, making it beautiful in itself and, moreover, enabling it to assimilate harmoniously new spiritual contents. Thus the French owe that superiority of character which they again showed during the World War principally to the age of their culture, which in their case has not implied any kind of degeneration, thanks to the circumstance that the real wellspring of life in France is a conservative and thoroughly healthy provincial population. The organism of the French soul can trace its pedigree down to Antiquity, which no other on the European continent can do to the same degree.

After what has been said, nobody will be surprised at the fact that the most exemplary type of humanity, at



least as a mass, has been realized by unintellectual nations, in so far as their soul offered a favorable—a rich and above all a stable—material. This is true of the Romans to a limited degree, for which reason they have never created a higher ideal figure than that of the perfect citizen; to a very high degree it is true of the English. Though generally their intellectual gifts are mediocre, they have reached a height of soul-development unequalled in any other part of Europe, which, in their case, is not a result of rich qualities, but of the consolidated original harmony of the soul; a harmony most effectually cultivated by a very wise system of education. This system is not intent on the acquisition of the greatest possible amount of knowledge or specialized intellectual mastery, but on the cultivation of the finest possible character; therefore, in the first instance, it makes a *man* of the Englishman, for which reason everything he does originates from the centre of his being or harks back to it. His sure instinct on all lines of activity, for which he is originally fitted, is the natural expression of this fundamental truth.

But altogether the most perfect type of humanity as a normal phenomenon has been elaborated by ancient China, and in this case, too, the success is to a great extent due to the fact that within the conservative basic disposition of that nation the qualities of the soul predominated over those of the mind, however great these might be. The national standard of perfection demanded that wisdom should express itself as gracefulness; beauty was appraised as the measure of profundity; morality was thought to mean cultivated nature; above all, the whole of life had its centre in the moral sphere. This being so, and the part bearing the stress of Sig-

nificance always creating the facts, life was actually centred in Essential Being. China's power of attraction, which by far surpasses even England's attractive powers, proves conclusively enough that it has set the stress of importance on the right place.

But of what use is China to us, of what use are all foreign and past perfections? We have to work with the material and under the circumstances which are ours. And there we must confess that to over-intellectualized Europe none of the former roads to perfection are of the slightest use. China's culture was essentially based on the belief in authority which can only thrive on the foundation of intellectual inertia or a deficient critical faculty; whereas English culture was to a great extent based on cant, which need not mean dishonesty, but a certain not-admitting of the facts of psychic reality and an assumption of supposed-to-be good motives everywhere, which in its turn amounts to the same as belief in authorities; the conservative basic disposition which is indispensable where superannuated conditions are to be perpetuated, can no more be premised as a power anywhere because the masses which are decisive today have no share in the tradition. All past authorities must be considered as dead for modern consciousness, though for the rest they may go on acting as retardative factors for a long time to come. The very possibility of perfection on the plane of the former uncritical state exists no more. The ideals of modern Democracy are liberty of judgment, outspokenness, self-consciousness, understanding of Significance. Whatever does not stand criticism will never again rule for any length of time. Bolshevism has an easy task with everything which depends on prejudice, and it is a significant fact that it attracts

a continually increasing number of adherents precisely in the Orient. What answer is there to give, when everything that hitherto was the mainstay and formative power of life is *proved* to be nothing but prejudice? None at all, if a change of plane is out of the question. Hence the unheard-of rapidity with which all psychic ties are dying out. One may rightly assert that not only the masses in the whole of Europe, but all the youngest representatives of the modern spirit of the age, do not in any way embody the hereditary culture any more. They view it as outsiders—as it has long been true, in a somewhat different sense, of America in its relation to Europe.

Thus, it is obviously the one thing needful for the modern Occidental that he should again attain, only on a higher plane of consciousness, to that wholeness, which mediæval man possessed to so wonderful a degree and which is often characteristic of the Oriental even today. For the individual this means, among other things, that he must regain his inner balance. It must be understood that, where the intellect is determinant, it is impossible that the psyche should not continue developing, for the former is perpetually on the move. The man-like intellect must, indeed, raise the woman-like soul to its own level, but the *soul* is the essentially vital, and therefore the decisive, force in man. Why did the Slavophiles in Russia enthusiastically admire the muzhik? Because in him was normally realized what no one else in Russia represented, apart from a few exceptional persons: a perfect synthesis between mind and soul. Yet higher forms of life-unities than that of the uncouth peasant should be possible, and the fact that in Russia they did not exist sealed the historic fate of the upper ranks there.

But as a rule, even the average educated European of today, whose type is more and more adjusting itself to the "man in the street," lacks all essential cultivation, in spite of his considerable intellectuality and the vast amount of information he commands. Hence his irreligiousness, his repudiation of all forms which create or preserve essential contents. Until this state of things has changed, Western humanity cannot possibly emerge from the chaos. It must be reformed inwardly. But today this is only possible through the intellect, by enriching and deepening understanding. The change cannot be worked even by the highest example of original soul-beauty or spirituality, unless the higher being is united with corresponding understanding and knowledge. Therefore, this time, salvation will not come from any new faith, however great the longing for it may be. *The new synthesis of mind and soul must originate from the mind, on the height of supreme intellectuality, if something decisive is to happen. What follows is this: the most important task today is not assigned to religion, but to—philosophy.*

**T**O PHILOSOPHY? To the science most out of touch with reality? To that sphere of expression of man's power of abstraction which is most unnecessary to life?—As far as philosophy is nothing more or better than this, it certainly has no healing powers. But philosophy is neither dry science nor intellectual sport: *it is essentially the completion of science in the synthesis of wisdom.*

That philosophy should ever have become a scientific discipline among others is the crudest instance of that fragmentarization and despiritualization which intellec-

tual progress has effected on all planes of life. Epistemology, phenomenology, logic, etc., certainly are important branches of science, and it means real progress on the plane of specialized knowledge that what used to be called philosophy in general should have been divided into these branches. But it was an unmitigated evil that as the result of this the sense for the living synthesis should have disappeared to such an extent that one has gone to the length of considering philosophy as the "science of sciences" and the philosopher as an encyclopædist. It may be that this evil was not to be avoided. The earliest syntheses arrived at by philosophers did not stand criticism, the truths contained in the records of ancient wisdom seemed capable of better setting and demonstration; in any case they needed completion. Therefore, it was only natural to question the entire value of the synthesis called philosophy, all the more as each synthesis seemed imaginable only in the form of ever more abstract systems, the more science progressed. But, as a matter of fact, the synthesis is the eternal and ever-present postulate, as well as the implicit premise of every kind of analysis. We may progress ever so far on the road of science: analysis can never be the final goal; it only dissects without being capable of conceiving a whole as a whole; it will therefore always remain a mere organ of life. We may learn to distinguish ever so many disciplines and to define ever so carefully one form from the other: all this can never mean more than that the organism of spiritual life is made more complicated and more perfect in exactly the same sense as an animal consists of more organic systems independent of one another and co-operating freely, as it were, the higher its organization. And



on the plane of understanding, philosophy expresses this ever-present undivided *life* which is the basic premise of all particularized organs and cells. One might say: philosophy, too, is omnipresent, just as life is with respect to its differentiated organs, only it does not always reveal itself as such; in principle, every science presupposes a philosophy as its *raison d'être*.

But, whereas unconsciousness does not mean a disadvantage on the plane of an automatically evolving existence, and the same is true of an unbroken soul-life and of all such processes as result from sure instinct, unconsciousness of the fundamental connexion of things or misunderstanding of this connexion means a vital danger to a life, whose centre lies in conscious spirit; and this is more and more the case with mankind at large. It makes no difference for chemistry, for the knowledge of high explosives and the like, to which of the philosophies the spirit of the age adheres; it makes every difference for man, and for mankind at large. For in the general distribution of weight the right proportion is lacking if the accent is wrongly placed and the real meaning is misunderstood; this can result in disintegration; man can lose his health, not only in the form of an acute or chronic disease, but even in the sense of a loss of vitality and, ultimately, of natural death. The more man develops consciousness, the more he is liable to make mistakes and the more fatal are his misunderstandings. It is not only imaginable, but it is even probable that there will be a stage in the evolution of life when conscious understanding of the vital connexion of things will be necessary for its mere existence—a stage when the self-regulation of nature will have ceased to work and the successful functioning of man

as a whole will depend upon conscious will. In that stage errors will cause immediate death. It is not true, though it is so often asserted, that progress consists in the transformation into automatic events of what was at first consciously performed: progress does not consist in this, but this process creates the *basis* of progress. Just as the automatic functioning of the organs makes spiritual freedom possible, as the artist must master the technique of his art without needing to give it a thought, just so the emphasis does not lie in the fact of an action having become unconscious, but, *per contra*, on the increasing importance of consciousness which rises to ever higher planes from ever new foundations of newly developed automatisms. And what happens on the planes of higher consciousness will be increasingly decisive the more the apparatus of life gets complicated. Therefore, it may become literally true that errors may result in immediate death. We have, of course, not yet reached that stage, but we are not so very far from it. The disintegration of Western life is the result of the very fact that the general connexion of life is misunderstood and that every soul is either more or less affected with a cancerous disease, as it were, or at least suffers from slighter organic or functional disorders. Taking all this together, it results in a universal loss of vitality. Obviously, only one thing can be of real help here: the revival, the enhancement, the deepening and elucidation of the vital basic connexion of life. And this is the very task of philosophy.

Philosophy must not remain a special branch of science or an intellectual sport; it must again become *wisdom*. In a higher integration it must once more become what it was, and what, for a time, it had ceased to be in

the process of scientific differentiation. If natural life springs into existence as a thing of perfection and in the happiest state of general balance, if the first result of higher development is disharmony, the highest development proceeds under the sign of the *ideal* of perfection. Thus, philosophy which began as the self-evident knowledge of nature's sages, and in a later stage was divided into many different branches of science, finds its consummation in the ideal of perfected wisdom. In this ideal consummation practice and theory will become united, knowledge and being will be fused into a unit of creative activity. But the emphasis lies on *knowledge*. The understanding subject is more deeply rooted in the essence of things than the active; as soon as it is fully awake, all ultimate decision is given into its hands. Therefore, the Hindoos are right in their teaching that all salvation depends on recognition. Therefore, it is contrary to the very nature of things if, given a high development of consciousness, salvation is expected to come from ranges of perfection of an inferior degree of consciousness. What Hegel proclaimed as true a century too early is true today. We have now actually reached the point at which the most important task in life falls to the philosopher and not to the teachers of religion or practical ethics: mind and soul must be brought into living harmony, but not from the basis of the soul, as every church and every school has hitherto attempted to do, but from the basis of the mind.

**T**ODAY, the historic juncture is indeed similar to that of the age of the great sages of Greece. At that time, too, the hereditary life-forms of the soul were getting disintegrated or were already disintegrated;

in those days, too, a better understanding of things only could save the Greeks from destruction. Thus, our age, too, can only be cured by wisdom, for only as a part of wisdom does knowledge cease to be dead ballast and a disintegrating element, and develop into a constructive vital power. But for the rest things have changed so much since the days of the Greeks that the differences outweigh the similarities. Thus today the word "wisdom," in itself as old as the world, embraces a new and unique content; for words always have the meaning one puts into them for the time being. Hitherto, all wisdom was more or less akin to the ideal of perfection of the Catholic Church: that is, it meant the realization of definitely formulated truths, which thus became the formative life-forces. The synthesis which was meant to unite the partial expressions of life into a harmony was thus presupposed and held up to each and all as a ready-made model. Today, all inherited syntheses have received the death-blow from emancipated intellect; today, nothing that intellect does not recognize as legitimate can survive. Today, no definite formation can be considered as a last resort, because our consciousness has penetrated too deeply into the essence of things. Today, therefore, our task is to achieve that perfection which alone can again make us into complete personalities, in full freedom of knowledge, and not in dependence on piously accepted tradition, be it ever so true: this is the goal of wisdom in our day.

This problem did not yet present itself to the sages of Greece. Though they discarded the authority of popular religion, the authority of something else—of intellect and logic, which to the Greeks was identical with much of what we now consider as part of simple

grammar—was all the more firmly established. And when for the second time in the course of Occidental history, in the eighteenth century, the tide of the historic process brought to the surface the philosophers as the decisive spiritual power, they, on the whole, repeated the mistake of the Greeks, they even exaggerated it, for the French *raison* which for that age was the ultimately decisive factor meant something very much narrower than the Greek Logos. Thus, in both cases, the philosophers did not act for long as constructive and connecting forces, they soon became disintegrating powers; and this was necessarily so. In Greece, only the earliest sages who taught from the depths of unbroken natural wisdom were essentially furtherers of life, and then again the latest who had achieved a new synthesis which, in its turn, served as a step toward a new religion. Thus, the fact that Socrates was condemned as a spoiler of youth by the Athenians does not mean an utter misunderstanding. Yet Socrates has remained the very prototype of the Occidental philosopher and this is the chief reason why the idea of the perfect sage as one who knows, not as one who seeks knowledge, has never even been conceived in our hemisphere, as it has been in India at a very early date and in a depth and clearness unequalled up to now. Hence our true sages have never been philosophers, however strange that may sound; an assertion which is best proved by Goethe, the greatest of all—whereas our greatest thinkers have hardly ever been sages. Hence wisdom has never yet been the conscious aim of Occidental aspirations.

Yet we are living at a historic juncture at which wisdom alone in the sense of a life grown to be knowledge can save us. The intellect has disintegrated whatever



there was to disintegrate; the work of Socrates may be considered as accomplished. Criticism, whether it originates from Luther, from Voltaire or from Kant, has pulled down all barriers limiting the field of action of thinking from without; it has for ever guaranteed that full freedom which is intellect's due. But it has thereby finally threatened the foundations of life itself, for it has ultimately led to this, that the very existence of everything which is not intellectually conceivable in the sphere of life seems imperilled. Religiousness threatens to disappear, morality, every direct inward support. And the various attempts of the often very artificial counter movements make but little headway considering this natural momentum. What is the use of founding new religions or restituting old ones if the belief in the right of existence of religions as such has disappeared? What is the use of all ethical culture if morality as such is considered as a product of prejudice? Today there is but one road to salvation: *that criticism itself, brought to its highest expression, is made to assist in the reconstruction of the plenitude of life.*

The new problem is: to explain the *Significance* of morality, the *Significance* of religion, the *Significance* of all that is proved to have been a salutary support to life, but which a preliminary criticism has condemned as unfounded in fact; this Significance must be realized in the profoundest metaphysical and vital sense, not in the superficial sense of those pragmatists who content themselves with the proof of utility or expediency as the last resort. This, then, opens a new sphere to philosophy which it has never yet entered in the West. Based on all critical achievements and autonomously founded on the profoundest understanding, philosophy

should henceforth set to work upon the new synthesis of life which alone corresponds to the stage of consciousness we have gained once and for all. And today, only philosophy is at all capable of creating a new synthesis. It is symptomatic that the modern rebirths or revivals of pristine forms of life, born of a feeling of despair at the void of disintegration which we can witness all over the world, generally correspond to the lowest and coarsest of states; spiritually this is true of political communism as well as of occultism in most of its forms: wherever man driven into the void by the intellect does not know what to do, he most easily turns from all considerations of reason. Yet, in reality, it is not a question of renouncing understanding, but of deepening it to such a degree that it becomes capable of embracing the whole of life, of reflecting it and reconstructing it from its own depths. The goal is higher than any of the Greek and French philosophers ever aimed at: it is not a question of making abstract reason, the limits of which Kant already recognized and defined with wonderful clearness, the sovereign ruler of life, *but to reach a degree of consciousness in which life as an undivided whole becomes conscious in its reality as well as in its Significance, and to make this Significance the basis of life.*

This, then, is the key to the problem why today neither the founder of religion nor the moralist nor the pedagogue, but the philosopher is appointed to the most important task: the realm of Significance lies beyond all formations of the intellect. Science has never troubled about this Significance, nor should it do so now. Science cannot penetrate deeper than to the empiric meaning as it reveals itself to natural science or to text-criticism. In the case of Jesus, for instance, science can

at best show what Jesus Himself has meant. But what is essentially important is the metaphysical Significance of his teaching, the eternal truth which it expresses in however veiled a form. Such eternal truth does exist; it is the profoundest basis even of mistaken belief. Only humanity has hitherto clung too much to the letter to be able to grasp it. Now it must be taught to understand it, for there is no other way to salvation.

**B**UT how is the philosopher to accomplish his highest task? If he is to accomplish it, he must perfect himself so as to become a sage. He must turn from the ideal of perfect science to the higher ideal of wisdom—that is to say, of a life essentially rooted in understanding; he must centre his consciousness in the realm of Significance. For this he must learn to withdraw the spiritual powers he possesses from the surface of mere representations to the centre of life, and there to focus them.<sup>1</sup> By shifting the stress of importance he must induce a change in the organization of his spiritual being, so that understanding *man* (the emphasis lying on the “man”), not the thinker or the man of scientific knowledge and comprehension, becomes his ideal. Instead of aiming at writing any amount of profound books which leave him essentially unchanged, he must strive to shape every manifestation of his nature, of whatever plane, into an involuntary expression of his profoundest knowledge. He must fundamentally transform his type. In the West, even the true philosopher was thitherto considered as an eccentric figure, and so he was; for being entirely out of touch with reality he

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<sup>1</sup> Compare for all details “*Erscheinungswelt und Geistesmacht*” in *Philosophie als Kunst*.

only too often represented a knowledge which was but remotely connected with real life, or else he kept aloof from the world as a simple spectator without even attempting to incarnate his knowledge in personal life. The true sage, *per contra*, whose whole life has been re-born out of the spirit of profoundest understanding, represents the highest fulfilment of *concentric* life imaginable on the near side of saintliness. Therefore, wisdom and the state of the sage do not represent anything remote, they are the true crown of life. In my *Travel Diary* I have stated the real case of the saints and sages and, in accordance, that of the absolute values in the abstract sphere: in them the basic notes of life, to which all others should be attuned, are sounded. In the context of our present considerations this more may be said: in them life's totality achieves its spiritual sublimation. Therefore, the state of the sage means nothing less than the highest stage of the complete soul, universality made flesh. Therefore, if presented as an ideal and an example, it can benefit each and all. And therefore wisdom is not a particular or an eccentric field of activity; on the contrary, it is in principle accessible to everybody. The fact that simple experience and mature age make more or less wise independently of existing talents proves that a conscious experience of the whole of reality and of its essential significance as well as the ensouling of every utterance by Significance lies in the course of life's natural evolution.

This normal process must only be quickened, it must be transferred from the plane on which knowledge shows *that* a thing is necessary and needful to the deeper range of understanding *why* this is the case—of course, this "why" taken not in the sense of empiric causality,

but as related to Meaning. Therefore, education to wisdom does not mean a postulate for a few privileged individuals. It is true that the abstruse wisdom of talented eccentrics is destined for only the few; this is so because it actually belongs to a remote sphere and only appears intelligible from a point of view located out of the way, thus only benefiting a few endowed with specialized talents. But the wisdom of a Christ, of a Krishna or a Buddha, does not shut out anybody. It concerns everybody and acts upon all, because it is the crowning of *normal* concentrically lived life; therefore it convinces even where the organs to grasp its entire meaning are lacking. It produces the immediate effect of a happy elucidation of what everybody feels as real and right in the depths of his heart, of a revelation from without of his own inmost knowledge of what is true. It bears a relationship of prestabilized intelligibility to each and all, as the basic note bears to every kind of melody based upon it. Therefore, although externalized understanding may be destined for only the few—*vital* knowledge appeals to each and all. It does not necessarily appeal to consciousness, but all the more to essential being which under all circumstances knows more than the best of intellects. Therefore, an education to wisdom is, in principle, destined for each and all, because within the limits of his qualifications everybody is capable of the adjustment which in the case of the highest gifts constitutes the sage. Surely, the sage alone can be a teacher of wisdom. But all can understand him to the extent his teaching is for their good. Just as in times of Faith religious truth shaped the life of all, setting aside the question how far it was understood in



each particular case, so in future it may be and will be the case with the understanding of Significance.

The higher influences the inferior and transforms it into its own image. Therefore, what is true of the founder of religion and the pedagogue is equally true of the sage, namely, that his essential being, not his activity, is of the utmost importance; since he represents the basic note in life's symphony, his most important task is to sound that note purely, and always to be leading in his rôle of keynote. By keeping awake the basic notes of life in the consciousness of all by his example, the sage, on the other hand, enables all to attune themselves rightly to these notes and to resolve the dissonances in their lives into harmonies. Moreover, by changing the key or the pitch of the note he takes that initiative which is the ultimate inner condition of all progress and effects an acceleration of universal life, which again and again is necessary if life is not to ossify or to decay. Life itself *is* a perpetual re-creation. This re-creation is put in motion by every acceleration of the process of evolution, and the acceleration in its turn is effected by creative initiative. The same scheme which applies to physical procreation applies from the historic process up to the very heights of purest spirituality. On all planes, the perpetual process of re-creation, which generally is a process of repetitions, must at certain intervals experience a transposition or a change of direction by means of mutation, in order to avoid an arrest of motion threatening death. If an accelerating factor does not again and again act upon life by means of such impulses, life ossifies, deteriorates and finally dies out. Thus, every human type, which is not rejuvenated or transformed in time, degenerates. Thus

every art-style becomes a *cliché* in the course of time. Thus, every determinate philosophy sooner or later congeals into dry scholasticism. Now the process of mutation, the nature of which appears entirely veiled in darkness in the case of the evolution of the species, which is altogether inexplicable in the case of the opportune birth and intervention of great men in the course of history, is at least familiar, though not intelligible, to all in the case of individual initiative. Initiative is the spiritual equivalent of natural creative power, as far as it involves new creation; initiative really means conscious creation out of the wellspring of nature; the invention of what is most needful in a given situation, the comprehension and fulfilling of what the historic moment requires, has exactly the same meaning as the development at the right time of the new physical life-form which alone is adapted to altered conditions.

Whoever shows initiative of spirit puts a new accelerating motive in motion within the spiritual world and is of greater importance than the most ingenious continuer of inherited lines of thought. And every creative mind shows such initiative. But the power of the sage is greater still. He, and he only, represents that moment of arrested motion in the realm of psychic and spiritual development which alone renews life as such. Whoever strikes a deeper basic note by his mere existence brings about not only a change, but essential progress. And when, as in our days, the new task set to humanity is to include advanced knowledge in the totality of life and again to ensoul life with deepest insight, only he is originally capable of accomplishing it who himself is not only spiritual initiative incarnate, but the initiative incarnate of a life ruled by spirit; whose consciousness

rooted in the creative depths of life and fed by it is continually bringing forth original productions, and thus unwaveringly remains on a level which towers high above all mere imitation, blind belief, changing opinions and all the other qualities belonging to scholasticism.

All this naturally applies to him who is at home in the world of Significance. But it applies to him only. Therefore, the existence of the sage as a type is the thing our age stands most in need of. It is true that he is only interested in Significance as such, which through all change remains eternally the same. But for that very reason at the right hour the impulse of renewal must emanate from him, which is needed at a given moment if life is to develop and rise and not to stagnate. For the very same meaning requires a different expression in different times.<sup>1</sup>

THE change of keynote which alone can save Western humanity consists in this: to consider all formations as expressions of Significance and to centre the whole of conscious life in its realm. This is the first time in the existence of humanity that such a task is set, for Sense-perception as understood in the context of our consideration was not possible before. But today it is imperative, because only the striking of a deeper basic note can lead to the composition of a new melody. But at this point one should not on any account be satisfied with half measures. The fact that religiousness is in a bad pass and will never again be brought to historic importance on the plane of blind belief, yet that, on the other hand, understanding of the *meaning* of re-

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<sup>1</sup> This last thought is the principal argument of the book completing this, *The Recovery of Truth*.

ligion brings man into direct and fresh touch with Divinity, undoubtedly means a progress on the plane of spiritual evolution. The fact that the inherited ideas of morality are disintegrated, but that the understanding of the *meaning* of moral striving has the same, or even a better effect than the former ties of blindly accepted commandments, implies that humanity is irresistibly rising from the state of subjection to a plane on which perfect self-determination becomes possible.<sup>1</sup> And lastly, the fact that individual configurations as such are not taken seriously any more, though for the moment causing a chaotic condition of things, yet that understanding of the *meaning* of the forms makes it possible that "without name or form" the same cosmos, which formerly existed only by means of those formations, is re-created, makes clear that humanity is approaching the stage in which it can centre its being and consciousness in a sphere higher than that of the configurations in question and can thus found its existence entirely in the realm of freedom.<sup>2</sup> In principle, the direction of the latest development is without doubt leading to the highest. But for us the *realization* of the ideal possibility is important above all. This never succeeds without conscious pursuing of the aim. Therefore, it is necessary consciously to lay the emphasis on what is most needful at the moment and to act practically in accordance with this necessity.

The following should be understood and acted upon. The decisive spiritual power in this age is not religion,

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<sup>1</sup>I have defined the true meaning of ethics and religion in *The Recovery of Truth*.

<sup>2</sup>I have fully developed the line of thought sketched here in the chapter, "World-Conceptions and Life-Configurations," in *The Recovery of Truth*.

but philosophy. The stress of importance must, therefore, officially be laid on philosophy. But the philosophy which is required is not what it was during the last centuries: it is not an eccentric mental activity—it is *life expressed as understanding*. The goal of the philosopher lies on the far side of all criticism, it lies in the direct experience of that profoundest depth of life on which all formations inwardly depend. This depth can be reached. It is possible to achieve through self-concentration a degree of consciousness which makes the subsidiary constructions of the intellect, such as logic and theory, altogether unnecessary by transforming the man who seeks for truth into the man who knows: a degree of consciousness by which the spirit becomes physiologically superior to the errors of reflective thought, and in which thinking and being become one to the extent that thinking, instead of reflecting essential being in a more or less distorted way, becomes its direct means of expression. And this aim is achieved when understanding intellect loses its parasitic position and, rooted in all the depths of the soul, becomes man's ruling centre.

LET us now turn back to the practical side of the question. We said that the foremost task of our age is to make the type of the sage possible, to educate him and to offer him the necessary response and possibilities of action. Wisdom is to become as direct an aim of life and object of teaching as faith and virtue have always been in the Church, and as science is in the modern world. The sage must become an independent authority in the universal consciousness. A new type of educational institution must therefore be founded for him. In order to get beyond the present chaotic state,



the disciples must be taught not to become fragments, but essential human beings, not to become thinking machines nor imitators and continuers of the thoughts of others, but men of vital understanding; they should become fully responsible and essentially original beings, who only profess what they really think and only think what is really accordant with their individual state; who do not rest until the word which they have recognized as their essential truth has become flesh in them. This can only succeed in a School in which understanding of Significance is imparted to the pupil by the teacher; a School that stands on the level which, again and again, in the course of this consideration has been shown as the level of consciousness of modern man in his most advanced state: the plane on which understanding and essential being are united and the former can directly influence the latter. It lies midway between the planes of existence of the Church and of the University, yet nearer the former than the latter, because the School of Wisdom is above all meant to influence Being. Not through pious acceptance of what is right, though—and this is its originality—but *through personal understanding*. Thus the School of Wisdom would essentially be a School of Self-consciousness in the spirit of the utmost truthfulness and the strongest tension of will. Rightly directed as such it could not help gaining the desired end. If the disciples were constantly urged not only to think for themselves, but at every thought to ask themselves whether it is actually accordant with their inner state; if they were urged to require of every sentence, be it ever so proved, that it should completely unveil its meaning to them, whereby they would be trained to perfect honesty and to extreme truthfulness

towards themselves, then all phantasmagoria would be put to flight as though by the wind and all imagination would become the expression or the mirror of the real. If, moreover, they were constantly shown the manner in which to form their lives in the spirit of understanding and to do only what corresponds to their profoundest understanding, not to permit the existence of anything preliminary within themselves, then undoubtedly a re-formation of their whole being would take place, and a synthesis of will, soul and mind would be brought about which would lead them far beyond the present state of dividedness and disintegration to the undividedness of the *complete man*, a type of man more deeply rooted in spirit than ever yet existed as a type.

The School of Wisdom must therefore be a third beside the Church (taking the word in its widest aconfessional sense) and the University. It would be on a line with the Church in so far as it would likewise try to form the whole of man and to spiritualize his soul, but, in addition, it would aim at the synthesis between the life of the soul and independent, fully conscious mind, so that faith would not mean the last resort, nor abstract knowledge, but faith, knowledge and life would coalesce in a higher unity of consciousness. And it would mean the crowning of the University. A crowning, because its task would be to incarnate the knowledge gained at the University in a life-synthesis capable of organically assimilating all information, thus transforming the man of "Ability" into the man of "Being." There are many who think such a School of Wisdom unnecessary; who think it sufficient if the masters work freely through books and occasional lectures; or else they do not believe that the plan can be realized; they

think it impossible to make the stimulating, life-giving forces which emanate from them, useful to each and all in a canalized form. They are mistaken. The creation of an external framework is necessary to the activity of the sage, in order to check the typical inclination of every intellectual to lose himself in the ideal. If wisdom is its aim, the mind must not on any account lose touch with reality and this danger is best precluded if from the very outset it has a definite task in the sphere of reality, or if it is induced to embody itself in a type which plays a definite part in practical life. Wisdom means perfection in the concentric, the spiritual sublimation of the complete soul. Therefore, its kingdom is entirely of this world. Intellectual man only too easily contents himself with self-sufficient life of thought and imagination, and if he is not compelled to create the synthesis of mind, soul and will, which with the majority can only happen from without, he finds it more difficult to become a sage than any natural and normal married woman of the pre-war type. How typically out of touch with life is the scholar! However favorable this may be to special branches of scientific research—where it is a question of comprehension of reality—it makes man blind and inadequate. One should call to mind the many fantastic ideas philosophers have hatched, the inability of most historians to understand history in the making. From the very outset the development of a type must be kept in view whose sublimest expression should be the sage and not the scholar, and which should find its objectification in an institution the fundamental adjustment of which should aim at the culture of essential being, not of ability. Everything, indeed, depends

on *adjustment*.<sup>1</sup> In principle, there are no limits to the development of every individual; this truth is expressed in the German adage, "To whom God gives an office, He gives the necessary wisdom." The direction of the development of each one depends on his inner adjustment. To that extent all life-configurations are results of volition. For this reason the university can never achieve what a School of Wisdom could. Here it is a question of definite adjustment of mind and soul. What its particular activity would be is a matter of secondary importance, for, in principle, everything can be done in the spirit of wisdom and everything can lead to wisdom.

Another consideration showing that the creation of an external framework for the activity of the sage is imperative is the necessity of erecting a platform for him in order to make him conspicuous to the world at large, to specify the intents of his activity from the very outset and to give it, as it were, an official character. The average man only notices what public opinion acknowledges as important, and only what is essentially understood and willingly accepted possesses real influence. No religion could have had an educational influence, had it not externalized what it aimed at in the authoritative type of the priest; in the same sense every savant, sooner or later, comes to see, however unwillingly, that he must join some scientific corporation of prestige in order to exercise a real influence. Now Western consciousness does not know the sage as a type at all; and until this type is worked out and recognized, until his task is specified and an external frame has been

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<sup>1</sup> This idea is treated in detail in the lecture, "Our Will."

created<sup>1</sup> assuring him of the possibility to work according to his mission, the sage will not be able to exercise the necessary influence, though he exist in many various forms. Whoever expects a philosopher to belong to the type of the scholar and the professor will only learn from him what a professor can teach; one can receive from others only what one inwardly concedes to them. Therefore, it must be made clear to public opinion that the philosopher is something intrinsically different from the scholar and the savant.<sup>1</sup>

But no less mistaken are those others who imagine that it is impossible to make the stimulating forces emanating from a master useful to the community in a canalized form. It is true that initiative of spirit and life from the creative depths are even less "teachable" than that virtue which Socrates thought teachable. If it is typical that the education of the convent-schools has never produced saints, but only monks of routine, it is utterly impossible to think out an abstract program which might awaken and form what is most subjective and intimate in man, the living centre of his soul, will and mind. But what is needful is not an institution in the popular sense of the word: it is something entirely new, which alone corresponds to the unheard-of degree of consciousness of latter-day humanity. The School of Wisdom is not to teach ability, but essential being. Accordingly, it will have to be entirely adjusted to the living personality. Its *existence* as such is the one thing that really counts. I need not say more about it, since all there could be said in the abstract has already been

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<sup>1</sup> I have said a good deal more about the type of the philosopher in the preface to *America Set Free*.



stated in the Introduction. Who wants to know more about the facts of the case, should come to Darmstadt.

**B**UT is it actually true that the solution of a problem of the soul and the mind, be it ever so fundamental, can bring about a change in general life?—The masses, which are for the present decisive, show little understanding for fundamentals and principles; very many individuals have not yet ascended to the degree of consciousness presupposed here. Would not social reforms and improvement of the masses be in the spirit of the age and much more to the purpose?—It is certainly true that a swift influencing of the inferior from on high is less to be reckoned with today than in any other age. But a swift and at the same time a lasting influence is never possible; that idea must be renounced from the very outset. A process of many hundred years will be necessary for the recovery from so tremendous a crisis as is the present. And in such a case only those matter who are in advance of their age, not those who linger behind—among the leaders as well as among the led; in all times human progress was directed by the example and influence of a few, be they individuals or types. The ages in which those examples and influences were directly at work were often hardly aware of their existence. But in the course of time their influence increased, their sphere of action expanded. Hundreds, thousands of years later, when the facts of their lives had long vanished from memory, when they had merged into symbolic images, they sometimes proved to be almost omnipotent. Therefore, in the long run, only those matter who are in advance of their times. There is no presumption in the belief that the solution of a

definite problem of the mind and the soul—at first only comprehended by the few—by a small circle can mean the most important task of an age and that a new typification of essential disposition may mean salvation. On the contrary, the many are mistaken who believe that the aim of human spiritualization could be achieved in the lowlands instead of on high, however necessary and useful their intents may otherwise be. All *decisions* are taken on high. Only there can they be taken. I shall devote the last part of this chapter to the elucidation of this fact.

Just as an angle is measured at the intersection of its sides and cannot be measured by any movements within it, the possibility decreasing in proportion to the distance from the intersection, just as every philosophy is clearly contained in its original setting of the problem, whereas its complete elaboration gives rise to the most various misconceptions: in the same way the clear understanding of the fundamental problem of an age is the only possible way towards its final solution. For clear understanding is a very extraordinary thing: it does not only mean the height of intellectual satisfaction, it also implies the organic solution of a crisis. Problems would not trouble mankind, whole epochs would not steadfastly strive for the truth, if dialectics appearing to belong to the realm of abstractions only did not mean the tension between real—*i.e.*, vital—forces of the Spirit. And this is really so. Therefore the right setting and comprehension of a problem really means good strategy, the solution of a problem means the same as the decision by battle, and the full clarity obtained means the achievement of the state of enduring peace. For this reason a decision is actually impossible on the near side of clar-

ity. As long as the fundamental problem of an age is not understood with perfect clearness and does not form the strategic point of departure, all attempts to cure ultimately mean nothing better than aimless mass-movements, and that all the more so, the more they aim at a complete cure; so long as the fundamental problem is not solved, there can be no question of victory, and all the less so, the stronger the forces involved. The result can only be wholesale murder and mutual destruction. Hence, the ultimately unsatisfactory character of all doctrines which, though they are right in themselves, cannot state their fundamental essence: they cannot solve the crisis. They belong to the sphere of effects, whereas all creativeness originates from the realm of the Essential Cause. Now this is the realm of the highest spirituality; it is the sphere which corresponds to the Greek *Lógos Spermatikós*. All decisions come from there, from the region of eternal clarity.

The decision also comes from there when, viewed from the outside, it is a case of the triumph of mass-movements. Christianity and Buddhism have been able to conquer worlds because Gautama and Jesus did not think of the mass, but because, having themselves gained clear understanding after bitter struggles, they embodied in their teachings ultimate decisions. These have been echoed in a steadily increasing number of souls; from within, not from without; from a depth mostly inaccessible and spiritually comprehensible only to the few; and in the long run a change took place in all who lived within the sphere of influence of the new doctrine. Thus all decisions have always been arrived at on high, and have descended from there. It is true that, especially in times of transition, as the present, the vague and the

inadequate attract large circles because they best suit their state of mind. For the very same reason it is also more easily understood than what is clear, but it leads to no essential results; or if it does, the reason is that something that is clear in principle is hidden beneath the vagueness. This is true of Socialism in many respects. Thus even the most limpid truth is always misunderstood and yet goes on working, because its inner light is so strong that it pierces the thickest veil, however subdued its rays. But the decisive influence is only exercised by clarity, clearly understood.

All attempts to cure the state of this age which have come to my knowledge are the results of an idea which has not been understood in its essence. Yet understanding is the all-important thing: unless an idea is understood there is no guaranty that a given movement, even if at first it was beneficial, keeps in the right direction. Hitherto, sooner or later, they have all turned to the right or to the left instead of going straight on. Not one of them, however right and sure of their aim, has been able to achieve anything decisive. Nor can this be expected as long as they adjust their volition to an inferior or average state, for nothing is decided on the plane of effects (as opposed to the creative principle) of an idea. Decisions only take place in their own realm of being. Probably all who strive for something positive today really aim at the same thing; fundamentally all I know are workers in the same field, however different their individual ideas and aims. Thus, from the basis of Meaning I have been able to come to an immediate understanding with socialists and individualists, with theosophists and their opponents of New Thought, with believers in a fixed order of things and with an-



archists. But all the more clearly do I state the problem this essay is dealing with as the all-important problem, because (to return to the simile of the beginning) it lies at the intersection of the angle, whereas all the others waver below it in space. All positive movements of the age do actually presuppose what I am advocating. Since today developed intellect has disintegrated all inherited psychic organizations, the fundamental problem is the new union between mind and soul. Thanks to the specific state of present-day humanity, this problem is more fundamental than religious conversion and national renewal, not to mention social reforms. All these problems will stand out in the right light then only, when the one we are dealing with is understood. Today, the change can be brought about only by philosophy. Therefore, an increase of its prestige is necessary above all. The fact that philosophy, especially in the high sense shown here, can be a matter of interest to only very few, is altogether secondary. Precisely these few matter. Humanity is organized in exactly the same way as the individual: as with him the decisions are taken in a certain layer of his essential being, with humanity they are taken by individuals, at the most by small groups. Nor need these groups undertake an extensive and direct activity. They need only become *centres* of activity. The essential is always something extremely simple. If only the light can be set high enough, an ever increasing number of mirrors will catch and reflect it.

What this age requires above all is, in fact, something very simple, even self-evident: what it needs is *health*. This means the attuning to harmonious unity of all essential parts of being of man in their full development. An animal is hardly ever sick, or if it is



it very easily recovers, because its nature regulates itself spontaneously. The same still applies to man as a physical being if the soul does not play an important part in his relationship to life. But the opening up of the psychic sphere has, in principle, destroyed man's natural balance, for it has made him capable of error; the danger of a chronically diseased state increases with the increasing development of mind and soul. More and more, all decisions belong to the sphere of personal consciousness, and this must be fully developed if it is to achieve the assurance of nature. Thus, from being self-evident at first, health ends by becoming an almost unattainable ideal. With the various parts of his being man belongs to various orders of existence: the natural, the moral and the spiritual. He does so originally whether or not he is conscious of the fact. But since with him personal consciousness is determinant, he may misunderstand the state of things; and if he does so, evil results are the consequence. He suffers bitterly for every misunderstanding. Moreover, the multiple elements of his being are in a state of perpetual, though not parallel and not necessarily connected, transformation. Thus, health means a problem perpetually new, never solved in a final way. In the very act of progressing man must continually seek and find a return to what was originally bestowed upon the child of nature as a gift of grace. This is the ultimate meaning of all exploration of nature, of all striving for wisdom, all God-seeking. Surely, on every new level of evolution health means something higher. As compared with the animal state of balance even the most diseased of aspiring men is in a position of vantage. But formally for man, too, health remains the ideal. Health must be

the aim of each one on his individual level. A divine state of health—divine in so far as the Divine would be harmoniously expressed in fully developed complete man—is the goal of every one of us. The more the soul develops, the more its state becomes determinant for the entire state of man. The more mind develops, the more all ultimate decisions lie with it. We have now reached the point at which only the comprehension of Significance can help Western man to recover health. Hence, to repeat, the decisive importance of philosophy.



# WISDOM VERSUS THEORY





## FIRST CYCLE



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## *I. Culture of Ability and Culture of Being*

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A COMPARISON between modern and old Japan, which with every successive year is withdrawing into remoter regions, irresistibly leads to the result that the latter is superior to the former. The ability of Europe's pupils in the Eastern Island Empire may already have come up with the ability of their teacher; but on the other hand their essential Being appears all the more inadequate, the more it has assimilated itself to ours; it appears frankly superficial as compared with that of the representatives of the old Japanese tradition. The traveller in China gets the same impression to an increased degree, for there the Occidentalized inhabitants can in no respect bear the comparison with those who are rooted in the ancient traditions. But it is with a feeling amounting almost to pain that the foreigner compares the Anglicized Hindoo or Eurasian with the representatives of India's best cultural traditions. The former, as a rule, does not understand himself any more, as soon as he thinks in English; he judges the wisdom of his forebears in a way more superficial even than is the case with narrow-minded European philologists. If he has learnt many a technical device from the Britishers, thanks to which he can externally compete with them—as a spirit, as a soul, as a man he is far below those whom the English rule without difficulty by reason of their greater ability.

Accordingly, it does not seem to be an altogether

undangerous thing to take over the ability of another Being; apparently, in the case of such a "cross" a law takes effect similar to that which makes the mulatto and the mestizo inherit only the faults of their incompatible ancestors. In any case, ability, be it ever so great, evidently cannot be considered as a proof of true progress, unless it is based upon corresponding essential Being. Now what is essential Being? Setting aside all metaphysical and epistemological definitions, whoever distinguishes Ability from Being on the strength of experience knows full well *what* he means, and that he means something real. One should never try to understand by means of definitions what is self-evident. For all of us the "Being" of a person quite obviously means his immediate personality as it is expressed in the embodiment of his thoughts, emotions and volitions; wherever essential Being is determinant, all these are direct expressions of the core of the personality, in which they are organically rooted. As opposed to this, Ability, in the first instance, is something merely external which everybody not lacking the necessary capacities may acquire without this fact establishing a relationship with his "Being." This short consideration should have explained the reason of the disagreeable impression produced by the modernized Easterners as opposed to the representatives of the ancient traditions: in the case of the former there is no vital connexion between their essential Being and their ways of expression. And since Being is a thing of exceedingly slow formation and corresponding longevity—certain beaten tracks within the nervous system, different with every nation, are transmitted from one generation to the other—the practical result of the lack of con-

nexion described in the above is that essential Being cannot manifest itself where adequate means of expression are lacking. To use an exaggerated expression: the Anglicized Hindoo resembles a Raphael without hands.

The logical consequence is that as the essential Being cannot express itself and cannot consequently develop, it gradually dwindles; and this circumstance in its turn quite naturally engenders a growing feeling of resentment, until finally the inferior side of nature preponderates. The objective and external result of the above-mentioned lack of relationship is, that the Western means of expression, though used ever so cleverly by Asiatics, do not express in that case what they are capable of expressing; as yet, the Oriental has only in exceptional cases achieved equivalent results on the planes of our science and technique, although here it is a question of something external which can, in principle, be brought into relationship with every kind of "Being"; and he has proved altogether incapable where he aimed at spiritual creations by means of expression borrowed from the West. These considerations, then, lead to a fundamental result, the importance of which reaches far beyond the sphere of the instances given above: namely, *the inadequacy of the current idea of progress*. Progress is generally defined as a function of Ability. That this way of understanding progress is not true to fact is proved by the example of the modernized East. But the same is made evident in a yet more forcible way by the example of the most youthful West. In this case, a discrepancy between Being and Ability need not have arisen, for the latter has originally developed out of the former. But once the idea of progress understood exclusively in terms of Ability determined con-



scious development, Ability grew to be so exclusive an aim, that every sense even of the values inherent in Being disappeared more and more; so much depends upon the thoughts of man! And when mere information had long enough been considered as an ideal, when public opinion had grown accustomed to judge personality by its proficiency and character by the membership of a party or a program; in a word, when public opinion had come to consider man as a "thing," there resulted in the West a solution of the connexion between Being and Ability, really brought about by artificial means and producing the same effects as the acceptance of means of expression not understood has produced in the Asiatics.

Thus the East and the West are converging in what is decidedly evil. In the West in its most advanced stage there is nothing but Culture of Ability: this is the true meaning of modern soullessness, which is also invading the East, in an enhanced form, in its present state of increasing mechanization. It is true that there still are representatives of true Culture of Being even in our midst; but they belong to the spirit of the past and can no more determine modern life. Their means of expression have become incomprehensible to the young, and they actually are no longer equal to the tasks of life. Today, a knight, a mediæval Catholic, a Protestant of the days of the Reformation, a contemporary of Goethe—they are all still to be found, for cultural types do not die out so quickly, nor are they so totally replaced by others in the course of history, as historians would have it—can no longer work beneficial effects, whatever attitude he may adopt, because he lacks the inner contact with the forces of a changed reality.

Owing to this circumstance, even those representatives of the old order who have personally remained profound are, from the social and historical point of view, in a position similar to that of the Westernized Asiatic and the mechanized European.

Is anything more needed to explain the Bolshevik tendencies of this age all over the world?—Those who are not in harmony with the spirit of the age are in despair, and either grow passive or else they attach themselves to reactionary movements breeding catastrophe. Among those who are up to date, on the other hand, an ever increasing number of individuals, groups and nations are becoming conscious of the sad truth that modern culture has developed into a culture of pure ability, in which vital Being is suffocating, instead of living itself out. And this naturally leads to convulsive efforts at liberation, which express themselves so radically and recklessly as no other similar efforts ever did, for the very reason that the whole body of culture has actually become a thing of the surface. At this point we can grasp the profoundest significance of that convergence between western Europe and Russia which first manifested itself in the veneration for Tolstoi and Dostoyevski and, since then, expresses itself in the irresistible spiritual Bolshevization of the most talented youth of all countries. In reality, the problems of Russia and the West are fundamentally different; at the time Nihilism came to light in the former, it meant nothing to the West, nor could it possibly mean anything to it. But in Russia it had its very good reasons. Russia had never experienced a Middle Age, a Renaissance, nor an age corresponding to our philosophic eighteenth century; modernity was externally and by violence forced

upon a mass whose mind and soul belonged to the ninth century, and upon an upper class whose character had as a type not developed beyond the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. And since the Russian people are bent on inward things, they early felt the discrepancy between Being and Ability, and they soon understood that it did not really mean in the Western sense what they had to express in the Western way. Thus, for the very same reasons which motivate Ghandi's movement in present-day India, the will to destroy what it had been forced to accept became historically determinant in Russia, a will which has almost attained its end under the iron rod of the Bolsheviki. Considered for itself, Nihilism is an exclusively Russian phenomenon. But its spirit could become the spirit of a greater part of the world, because the hypertrophy of ability and its formations has led to a similar state all over the world. The most talented young do not feel the slightest relationship between their own Being and the inherited forms. Hence they begin by aiming at a return to a state of nature: their idea is that learning and ability have led themselves *ad absurdum*.

Have they really?—The misunderstanding implied by the idea that information and ability suffice to prove the existence of a high cultural level has been refuted by the spectacle of horror provided by the World War. This war has shown beyond doubt that modern man lacks all moral checks to a far greater degree than any of his forebears; as political beings the nations of present-day Europe are characterized by what is called moral insanity with individuals. There is no clearer illustration of this fact than the most recent inclination of the doctors of international law to define war as an absolute

infringement of law, wherefore all ties of peace should be considered as *ipso facto* non-existent, as long as war lasts. Truly, there is no other way of justifying the modern war of extermination as it actually presents itself to the world. . . .

Secondly, the World War and its aftermath have proved that ability has not made man more powerful, but more impotent than he was of yore. Never, within the memory of man, has the discrepancy between the greatness of the happenings and the smallness of man endeavouring to direct their course been anything like so immense. It is true that the material forces, which in reality carried on the World War—from the high explosives and the levies of masses down to the association of interests spanning the globe—were set into the world by man. But once they had been created they proved even more superior to their creators than the spirits of the magician's apprentice in Goethe's poem. Man had become nothing but the slave of his "things." Their concatenation grew to be so terrific a power, that one felt as though witnessing the resurrection of antique Fate, of that absolutely irrational, overpowering Fate to which gods and men alike had to bow. Thus the progress of ability had brought things to such a pass that the lifeless gained almost unlimited power over life; the fact that millions can die without rhyme or reason on the basis of a calculation implies that spirit is ruled by figures, and not the latter by the former.

But thirdly, the spiritual backgrounds of this same World War have shown that everywhere there is an obvious discrepancy between inner volition and external doing. This war was to put an end to war as such, it was to found a better world and to bring freedom to

all nations—and what has really happened? And what is going on?—What will most probably inevitably continue for years to come? The very opposite of what was intended. Ability in itself is obviously entirely powerless; it follows mechanical, unspiritual laws, which force man, who has made himself tragically guilty, to what he wills least of all things. Hence it is only natural to declare war to modern ability as such, and to return to the primordial which one somehow imagines to be innocent as well.

YET what lies nearest at hand is not necessarily the wisest thing to do. When a task seems to be beyond one's strength, the first question to be taken into consideration is whether one cannot become equal to the work. Keeping this in mind, we shall find when comparing the spectacle of our time of decline, in which things decide over persons, with any of the great ages of history that the latter were always characterized by the fact that live personalities ruled the things. This is true without a single exception. It seems natural to infer that today gifted personalities are simply lacking. Yet the conclusion is wrong: on the contrary, never have such manifold talents been at work; and even if greatest personalities really are wanting, justice compels to remember that even in the greatest epochs such personalities were rare. No, the case must be different. Firstly: is it literally true, that today things, not persons, are dominant? They cannot really be. Charges of explosives never explode of their own accord; calculations must be made by somebody. Nor does any institution act spontaneously; everywhere a free agent of some



kind keeps it going. If the personal freedom of the latter only serves routine, if the individual without will of his own accomplishes only what he is given to do, he is even in this case, from the metaphysical point of view, a free agent, for he might have developed himself into a more independent personality. This is so everywhere. Every judge *may* not only interpret the law, he *must* do so in order to apply it to the concrete case under consideration, and even if apparently he only interprets according to precedents, he has made among them his strictly personal choice. We must, therefore, conclude that everywhere and under all circumstances man as a free agent is ultimately responsible.

And this is not less, but all the more the case, the more the mass seems to decide. The freedom of choice of a man who can discharge a modern high-explosive means more than the freedom of the savage brandishing his sword. In times in which the people are apparently ruled by the people, the leader for the time being, be he ever so insignificant in himself, has much more possibilities to live out his personal inclinations than the recognized autocrat. As there is no relationship between his responsibility and his power, he is very easily conscious only of the latter; it becomes the instrument of his empirical Ego, which is therefore much more co-determinant than where man consciously serves a great whole feeling inwardly bound by its laws. And even setting aside the possibility of misuse, there can be no doubt whatsoever that the modern mass-leader, however much restricted he may seem, is much more powerful as a matter of fact than any hero of Antiquity ever was. Under these circumstances, the problem of con-

quering the Moira of civilization is obviously different from what it is generally thought to be, and as our first considerations, too, led us to expect. It is *not* true that things in themselves decide—persons decide today more than they ever did. *Only, the persons are not equal to the things.*

If at this point we recall the considerations of the chapter, "The Creation of the Best-possible World," we are quite near to the solution of the problem. Not only the happenings in the world surrounding him, but his personal adjustment, too, ultimately depends on man. If modern man, who is in principle master of all things, and who finally decides personally in every single case, is powerless nevertheless (*he must out of free choice have assumed a false position towards the things and towards himself*), then it must be his own fault, and not the fault of the apparatus he created, if he has become so impotent and so bad. It must be so indeed. Personality has been sacrificed to things because of wrongly applied and distorted thinking—that is the only reason why man has been made powerless by what might and should have made him powerful. Owing to a false adjustment and attitude, his most vital forces are not brought into play. They were not made use of, not even by the most talented, by the very best. Externalized knowledge was decisive; Being, personality had no voice; and Significance in every particular case was understood in a correspondingly superficial way, and was realized in a correspondingly inadequate manner. If essential man had had an adequate consciousness of his responsibility, he would have remained the leader even under the complicated circumstances of this age. Surely

it must be so. But if it is so, then our postulate that ability should be based upon corresponding Being has an ethical background which shows that its accomplishment is possible in principle. Then it must be possible to raise our culture of ability to a means of expression of a corresponding culture of Being; then it must be possible to lift ourselves as determinant personalities beyond the piled-up objectifications and to transform into means of expression what was the last resort of the past decades. Just such transformations were the *raison d'être* of the greatness of former great ages. In every one of those cases, too, it was an ability superior in some particular respect which brought about the external ascent of a people or a culture—one should call to mind the technical proficiency of the Egyptians, Greek intellectuality, Roman skill in the handling of war, and administration down to Napoleon's art of strategy and British political routine—but in all these cases, this ability was subservient to a superior spirit. Today we have at our disposal richer means of expression than any other age; only we do not know how to say anything with them, as it were. In principle, our actual problem, however new and unique it may appear, is no other problem than that which Antiquity and the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century even succeeded in solving. Only practically its solution is more difficult, because this time ability has emancipated itself to an unheard-of degree. Yet the solution of the problem is possible, nevertheless. It is possible in the sense that the inward, that personal man should rule.

But, unfortunately, only a very few as yet see the task in the true light. Most of those who think are

probably aware of the fact that the condition of the world in its present state of confusion must grow increasingly worse. But many still imagine that the disaster may be averted by external reforms of a social or economical nature, or by a new high-handed organization such as that of the present-day League of Nations, or finally by a new faith, new as to its content. But did not the tragedy of modernity which found its expression in the world-catastrophe lie in the very fact that man was *subservient* to his organizations and intellectual contents? that he was not only far smaller than his ideals, but that he had no inner right to have the ideals he professed? And if really reforms are worked in the sense of the highest ideals—what can be the result? Only an increase of the tension between the ideal and reality. As long as there are no true socialists—*i.e.*, people in whom the altruistic tendencies predominate over those of egoism—no socialization will initiate progress; as long as humanity in its heart is bristling with weapons, it is all the same whether or not the powers reduce their armaments. As long as a better faith is not professed by profounder human beings, it means nothing. External reforms as such are of little use. And if externally they make for the semblance of too high a moral state, they only effect a lack of all feeling of responsibility in the individual—the individual becomes consciously dishonest, and beneath the conventional mask he does all the more what is personally profitable to him. Too extensive external reforms, therefore, only accentuate the discrepancy between reality and the ideal. But on the contrary, this discrepancy—that is, between Being and Ability, between Meaning and Expression—should

progressively diminish, until congruency has been achieved. This can succeed only if the reform of inner man is first taken in hand.

FOR the practical solution of the task in question it seems best to begin by giving it a somewhat different setting, by connecting it with our considerations on the meaning and purport of "Significance." As far as it is at all possible to grasp it intellectually, life in contradistinction to its bodily, psychic and spiritual means of expression can only be understood as a Sense-connexion. Only those facts which are likewise symbols are charged with life; only what is included in the sphere of the living belongs to it inwardly; he only fulfils the destiny he personally feels to be his who gives a personal Meaning to his life. Viewed from this angle, the fact that the connexion between Being and ability is lacking means nothing more or less than that modern life has become meaningless. If it is possible that fulness of power, increase of wealth, proficiency, information, ability and plants can appear as ends in themselves, if personal life is subservient to them instead of mastering them, then life obviously must lack all meaning of its own. Modern man, who imagines himself to be free, really thinks of himself in about the same way in which the master of Antiquity thought of the slave, and he uses his power not only over others, but over himself accordingly. There are, of course, individuals who play the *rôle* of the beast of burden with enthusiasm—this is true of many modern leaders; a believer in reincarnation might suppose that in a previous life they had been galley slaves and had not yet had the time to get rid of the routine; but generally speaking, it is more than natural



under the circumstances that whole nations should be possessed by the will to suicide, or at least by an uncontrollable desire to destroy whatever is likely to prove a fetter. Man is capable of bearing anything excepting the consciousness that his existence has no meaning; for meaning and life are one and the same.

Viewed in this light, the problem we first thought solvable by the establishment of a harmony between Being and Ability takes the shape of the following alternative: either really to dismiss or to destroy what has become meaningless, as Bolshevism is doing, *or else to give a meaning to what hitherto had none*. The first idea need not be taken into consideration at all as long as the alternative exists. Now is it possible that what was hitherto meaningless may become meaningful? It is indeed. Only the answer to this question presupposes a deeper understanding of the problem of Significance than we have as yet attained. The problem of Significance is, as we have seen, fundamentally identical with the problem of Life itself. Now what is Life, technically speaking? A vitalization (*Beleben*) of what is dead in itself. The physical organism maintains itself and develops by assimilating otherwise dead matter and making it part of its vital connexion, from single particles of matter to the sea playing the *rôle* of the lymph for the physiologically open starfish to the air we human beings breathe in and breathe out, and ultimately to the universe which is related to a specific intersection of co-ordinates in the case of each individual existence. Wherever there is life, the external becomes part of connexions to which it does not in itself belong; and these connexions being living ones, our definition without doubt points to what is technically essential. Now vitalization (*Beleben*) ap-

pears all the more as the essential characteristic of life, the more it grows to be an expression of spirit. Every kind of grasping and taking in already means a vitalization of what is originally lifeless; but understanding does so to a higher degree. Not only for the reason that only what is understood can be considered as really assimilated, but because understanding gives man power over what he has understood, and because everywhere the external world bears the mark and assumes the shape assigned to it by the Spirit, wherever the latter has understood. And now another truth sets in: the deeper the layer to which the understanding Spirit reaches down, the more the object-world participates of life. Thus the depth of Sense-perception appears to bear a direct proportion to the extent of the sphere thus penetrated, however difficult the proof of this may be: just as the mathematical formula implies a greater number of particular cases, the more general it is, just so every step deeper down to profounder insight implies ascendancy over a greater number of forces and situations.

If we keep this in view, it is easier to understand what we have already stated on another occasion: that the conscious process of life is only kept in motion when personal life has its roots in deeper ranges of Significance. As soon as a person feels his life to be meaningless, he ceases to strive; the more meaning he sees in his life, the greater the forces that work through him. Thus we are led to the following thesis: *Meaning and Life are not only one and the same—the degree of vitalization evidently corresponds to the degree of depth, to which Life is rooted in Significance.* This, then, finally explains the suicidal state of mind of mechanized humanity. And at the same time it explains, what is unquestionably true—

why of all epochs the religious show the most tremendous power of Life and action: what man calls God, is his image for the ultimate and the profoundest Significance.

But now we must ask a further question: what is vitalization and its spiritual equivalent, Sense-perception, from the technical point of view? *It is an active, a creative process.* Vitalization always takes place from the inside to the outside. Life is never contained in matter, nor can it be extracted from matter: Life can only be built into it. Wherever Spirit and Life exist, they are always the primary phenomena; this is the reason why a cell is absolutely necessary for the propagation of a given life-form, and tradition for the perpetuation of a Spirit in the form of understanding; and personal creative power working from within, if a letter is to reveal a new meaning or any meaning at all. Meaning is never contained in the phenomena as such: it must always be put into them. This circumstance is of decisive importance for our present argument. It is true that the intrinsic existence or essential validity of Significance does not depend on empirical conditions. *But it becomes part of empirical reality only where it has been put into the phenomena.* Thus the meaning of a book actually comes into existence anew each time it is understood; and it remains unborn where understanding is lacking. Objectively and without vitalization through the Spirit, the book always remains paper plus printer's ink. This is true in exactly the same sense that, from the "objective" point of view, the body consists of matter and material forces; unless the body is vitalized from within, it is what one calls a corpse: its connexion has lost its meaning, for which reason it soon falls to pieces.

Now what is true of books and of the physical organ-

ism holds true of all Sense-connexions, including the ultimately imaginable Sense-connexion which embraces the whole of the world. To seek for a "Meaning of the World," which should exist apart from our existence, implies a misunderstanding: as a matter of fact—there is no question of theory here—the world has a meaning exactly to the extent that this meaning is realized. This shows the true Significance of Christ's teaching that the Kingdom of Heaven must be realized here on earth; only by means of this realization does Heaven become a reality to us. This also explains why God has always needed the collaboration of man, in order to carry into effect His will. It explains, finally, what we know as a fact by experience—*viz.*, that life grows meaningless as soon as man ceases to relate its processes to Sense-connexions; this is the reason why cultures die out with a tremendous rapidity, when the Sense-connexions they incarnated lose their vital Significance; this is also the reason why human life has again and again in the course of history relapsed from spirituality to animality. And the meaning of the aforesaid is by no means, that Spirit and Significance are something purely subjective, that is to say, something empirical, having its roots in imaginative man: the true meaning is, *that Significance works from within to the outside; figuratively speaking, that it is the perpendicular line on the horizontal of natural givenness.* Therefore, what appears to be subjective when viewed from the natural plane and judged according to its norms, is the very essence of spiritual reality to the extent that it is real. Meaning *can* only be expressed from within to the outside, and it can only be understood thus. Therefore, it only realizes itself through the personal activity of free agents. This, then, gives us the



clue to the metaphysical meaning of the above statement, that even in connexions which seem to be purely objective, personal man ultimately decides. Under these circumstances, the principle of Life is a subject and not an object; accordingly, there simply is no Life wherever there is no subject to give a soul to supposed-to-be living phenomena—a fact again and again proved by experience. Sense-realization means vitalization; vitalization is only possible from within to the outside; everything that life is capable of assimilating can be vitalized. But no objective phenomenon possesses life in itself and out of itself. And now we can finally answer the question whether it is possible to give a meaning to what is meaningless: *Nothing in the sphere of dead nature is originally meaningful, but everything can become so if brought into vital relationship with the living Spirit.* This is most emphatically the case where the phenomena dependent on man have lost their meaning: in principle it is always possible to draw them back into vital relationship with life. Therefore, it is not necessary to destroy the Occidental apparatus of civilization, however purely mechanical it has become. What has lost its meaning can rebecome meaningful.

**B**UT how can this be practically achieved? How is it possible to restore the relationship between “Being” and emancipated “Ability” and to develop the former in a correspondingly higher degree? We have now reached another fundamental problem, which had already presented itself to us in the negative form at the beginning of our consideration: *the problem of true progress.* We had found that progress in mere ability does not mean true progress, because it applies only to



the means of expression of life, and not to life itself. Is there any possibility of progress where life itself is in question?

Nobody doubts the fact that there are higher and lower levels of life. Within the frame of the same nation, the same age, the same culture, there are great and small, profound and shallow, superior and inferior men. And there is no doubt that in each case the greatness, profundity and superiority are a question not of ability, but of Being. We have defined the concept of Being at the beginning: a person's Being means his personal core which serves as a vital background to all his utterances and expresses itself through them. Now what constitutes a higher value—*i.e.*, superiority of Being—if such exists? Superiority means that the powers of the Spirit and the soul appear to be related to a deeper Sense-connexion than is usually the case. The same things have a different meaning, for the superior personality, than they have for the inferior. The selfsame phenomena have a different meaning and consequently actually become something different every time they are brought into relationship with a deeper layer of Significance. Now if we express this state of things in abstract terms, we shall find that the concept of essential progress has indeed a content—only it relates to a dimension different from that of every possible transformation in the sphere of nature. If we picture the latter as representing a horizontal plane, the course of essential progress lies in the direction of its perpendicular. Hence it takes place in the very sphere in which Sense-perception and Sense-realization are effected. This should make quite clear how it is possible that external progressiveness gives no clue as to inner progress, and that depth, greatness and superiority

can be found at every stage of external progress. For an inner progress to take place, the raw material of the expression in question need not change at all. Nature's alphabet (the word taken in the widest possible sense) remains immutably the same; that is to say, what is added to it from time to time means nothing as to the predominance of the everlasting. But just as the twenty-five letters of our alphabet give expression to things totally different when used by a Goethe, than they do in the hands of an average man, just so the different centering of the same Sense-connexion in each case creates new vital facts. From the point of view of Spirit, therefore, the greater or less wealth of letters is of no importance whatsoever; everything depends on what is expressed by these letters. *Under these circumstances, those external things in which alone the nineteenth century imagined progress to lie are irrelevant from the point of view of essential progress.* In the case of the former there can be only a question of improving and perfecting the means of expression. With these more may certainly be said, provided one has more to say—but everything depends on the existence of this “more.”

Thus the answer to the question, how it is possible to relate emancipated Ability back to Being?—a question wherein that of the possibility of true progress is included—is in principle this: Ability becomes an expression of Being, when the external is brought into relationship with inner Significance. And superiority depends on the depth of Meaning which becomes concreted through it. The man whose vital background is God is on a higher level than the man whose last resort is his empirical Ego; and this superiority unmistakably reveals itself in the greater vitality and importance of what he achieves.

Now let us take one step more: Significance is realized only by expressing itself; it must find an *adequate* expression, in order to become fully capable of action. Therefore, every new Meaning demands a new Expression; therefore, every new Expression brings down from the world of Ideas, as Plato would put it, a new Meaning. To that extent one must admit that—contrary to what was first said—it is yet true that deepening can have an exponent in a change of appearance—only progress is never brought about by the change as such, but by what is *expressed* by it. At this point a fundamental connexion is revealed, which is of decisive importance for the solution of our present problem. If Significance means Life, and Life, in principle, means vitalization, then it is obvious that more force is required, the richer the body which has to be given a soul; and if we look at the same facts from the point of view of Significance, we must say: the richer the body, the profounder must be the Sense-perception. Superiority always means that the centre of consciousness lies nearer the intersection of the spiritual co-ordinates than is the case with an inferior man, just as on the abstract plane the fundamental mathematical formula, once it is found, anticipates the solution of all the particular problems subordinated to it. Thus if our life has become superficial because its external side has developed too richly, merely technical progress can be transformed into essential progress only if its wealth is related to a correspondingly greater depth. Thus the tragedy of the present age can be illustrated in a manner true to Significance by the following simile. Cultures are like trees: as the roots of the trees must stretch down farther into the soil the higher their tops rise towards the sky, so every culture as it grows richer

must become more deeply rooted in Spirit. Our present culture is like a tree the roots of which have not stretched down in proportion to its higher growth; thus its crown has withered. But as soon as the roots again begin to grow, the crown may burst into new leaf. In this connexion the problem of the new union between mind and soul, of the congruency between Meaning and Expression, of the mutual assimilation of Being and Ability, can also be expressed thus: *that a new synthesis of Wealth and Depth is required.*

THUS the theoretical basis of what the present consideration aimed at may be considered as finished in the sketch. Without further digression we can now turn to the problem of the immediate practical realization of what we have recognized as necessary. The next question is whether and how it is possible to develop deeper Being. When we speak of the Being of a man in contradistinction to his ability, we mean his vital soul; and when we say that this Being decides, we mean that all his utterances are penetrated with individual life, that every single expression radiates personality, and that this personality is ultimately responsible. Now such a penetration can actually be achieved where it does not already exist. It is possible, thanks to the fact that man as a being possessing a mind and a soul represents a Sense connexion within which his consciousness moves freely. He is free to lay the emphasis wherever he pleases; according to the "place" thus stressed the psychic organism actually shifts its centre, and thus actually obtains a new centre of Being. Therefore, if theoretical inquiry shows that it depends upon the centring of consciousness, whether the centre of a man lies in his Being or at the

surface, then it must be practically possible to induce the necessary process of shifting. Hence in principle everybody can succeed in raising his Expression, which at first embodied mere ability, to an Expression of Being: to this end he need only persistently lay the emphasis on his essential Being, persistently demand of himself that he should never utter anything but what is really consistent with his inner Being. Surely the task is a hard one. Its solution is not only a very slow process; it necessitates a specific technique of training, on which I cannot enlarge here, quite apart from the fact that it is still in its very beginnings. But its fundamental idea is obvious, and that is the only important thing for the moment. It is altogether certain that man can change himself; that superficiality, for instance, is never a fated state—this single fact proves that what we postulated so far in theory is really capable of practical realization. To make my point clear to the extent this can be achieved at present, I will use, instead of enlarging on theoretical considerations, an example which is intelligible even to the man in the street. I assert: nobody need have opinions; it is always a sign of a deficient sense of responsibility if a person allows himself to have “views” on things. A person may only have *insights*. (The German expressions *Ansicht* versus *Einsicht* cannot be rendered in English.) Therefore he should hold back his opinions until he knows. Now, that this really amounts to a practical alternative is made evident by the well-tried effects of responsibility everybody knows. Nobody keeps to “opinions” where he has to expect dire consequences in case of failure; in such critical situations everybody judges according to true insight. But the same experience teaches, furthermore, that to act thus upon one’s



own responsibility and according to the best of one's insight leads to inner growth; responsibility has a deepening influence. This shows that adequate training can transform the man of mere ability into the man of essential Being. That reverses of fortune and suffering have the same effect is a well-known fact. Now it should be clear that what external circumstances call forth, free initiative must likewise be able to effect. In principle, it means only a *détour*, if the soul needs external coercion or even external catastrophes, in order to get into touch with its deeps; even in this case the soul itself ultimately brings about the change, for nothing external can coerce the free subject as such. And the experience of thousands of years really proves that insight and understanding, if only they have sufficient strength and occupy consciousness long enough, irresistibly create a reality corresponding to them. This is the *raison d'être* of all higher education, of all asceticism, of all spiritual exercises, of all Yoga. It is self-evident that the creation of reality out of the womb of Spirit does not succeed from one day to another. In this case, too, an organic process of growth takes place, a living assimilation of the external by the internal, and that takes time. But it is always possible in principle. Therefore it must be possible to "breed" culture of Being, just as culture of ability can be "bred," only in another way. Hence, in principle, superiority is not a product of nature, but of culture. It is true that in the case of its greatest representatives it generally appears as a product of nature, because here it reveals itself as bound to supreme talent, which reaches the highest level independently of all tradition. But this is true only of the genius. Wherever it really exists, the cul-

tural height of an age and a nation is independent of such genius, because such inspired spirits are all too rare. Cultural height must be measured by the level of the determinant *type*. And enduring types invariably are products of breeding.

This, then, is a fact of the utmost importance ultimately proving the possibility of the practical solution of our problem: superiority is, in principle, a product of culture. This is the reason why there can be races and castes which rule owing to typical superiority of Being. These continue to exist in a great measure independently of the individual endowment of their members. The reason is that something super-individual is alive within them the superiority of which is not annulled by personal inadequacy, and that its essential part is something belonging to the type. They are really products of breeding, and all breeding is a thing of cultural volition. It is true that the species and races of nature are spontaneous phenomena just as are languages, but on the other hand, no improvement ever came about without conscious volition. Even the physical types are born of the Spirit, wherever they represent something superior to the normal natural state, even though in such cases the Spirit may have worked unconsciously by the instinctively right selection of the mate. But what in each case continues as a historic type for centuries is only to a slight degree dependent on physical heredity; psychic and mental parentage is much more important in this case than physical parentage, because physical heredity only propagates certain fundamental qualities, and historic types are exceedingly complex formations. That these formations as such are not transmitted is proved by every

transplantation of a race onto foreign soil or into new surroundings,<sup>1</sup> as well as by the effects of all revolutions altering the psychic atmosphere. Therefore even the superiority of the aristocracies is more a product of social rank and tradition than of blood, however important the latter may be. This is the reason why the admixture of inferior blood alone has never really been prejudicial to it, as long as its mission kept alive its type as an ideal. The fact is that education on a background of tradition creates a spiritual type, for which the physical type only offers the favorable basis. Thus the *civis Romanus* was a spirit-born type, and so is the English gentleman. One may even say: the more spiritual the type, the less important the question of blood. The Hellenic type survives even today, in spite of the fact that the blood-basis has completely changed since the days of Antiquity. For the same reason the question of descent plays a far less important rôle in France than anywhere else in modern Europe. (It is quite obvious that those pronounced professional types, as that of the divine, the judge, the professor, the lawyer, the general, the waiter, etc., are spiritual products.) The most impressive instance of the spiritual dependence of superiority is offered by China; there superiority can be *proved* to be the product of a determinate system of education, of which more will be said in the following chapter.

Now what is true of China's past is true of our future. If we have recognized that the failure of the mechanized

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<sup>1</sup> I have developed this trend of thought in the first chapter of *America Set Free*.

world is a result of the fact that the things ruled living man; if we have, moreover, recognized that salvation is possible only if another, profounder generation arises; if it is now clear that cultural types are products of culture under all circumstances—that is to say, that they can be bred—then we may now add this: the necessary culture of Being, which is to be represented by adequate personalities, *can* in principle be founded. And all the more so because, as it was shown in *The New Union of Mind and Soul* this time the typification must, under all circumstances, proceed from understanding, for man has a far greater influence on the process of understanding than on that of the alogical powers. At this point we will recall the trend of thought of the chapter, “The Creation of the Best-possible World.” We have seen there that the specific character of the historic world is ultimately dependent on man. But this is not only true in the external sense that its appearance is more or less pleasing; it is true in the deeper sense, that the world incarnates more or less Significance, and Significance of a different kind in each case according to man’s creative attitude towards it. Therefore every new culture literally transformed the world; the specific soul which each culture gave it in each case made the unchanged alphabet of the world express something unique. Now apart from its specific character, this particular expression may embody a superficial or a profound meaning. And if at this point we remember the correlation of wealth and depth, we can say this more: if now the world is created anew from the basis of a profounder understanding than was ever yet attempted, *then it is possible not only to found a culture of Being capable of*

*ensouling our advanced culture of Ability, but a culture which is absolutely higher than any which hitherto graced the earth.*

NOW it must be understood from the very outset that this end cannot be attained within a short space of time, nor can it under any circumstances be reached on a grand scale. So tremendous a Karma of the worst description has been set in motion by the last century, and, in its turn, since the World War it is generating and multiplying in so horrible a manner, that the process of destruction can on the whole no more be stemmed. Whatever today is in the midst of the fray will inevitably end in mutual annihilation. The inherited impulse, incarnated in passions and engulfing ever new personal forces through fear of failure, is so overpowering, and their summing up, embodied in nations, parties and groups bound by common interest, in its turn so powerfully affects the individual, that, unfortunately, there can be no question of evading the impending fate. Its completion can only mean an absolute end. Any other completion is totally unimaginable, because no fighter in the day's battle is fighting for an attainable goal. In politics as in business one must make a sharp distinction between aims connected with the turnover and aims connected with the possible net profit: he only thrives who works *directly* for the latter on the basis of a correct calculation of expenses. Now the historic forces which are at present visibly decisive belong exclusively to the plane of turnover. Not only are all emotions essentially transitory things, so that those born of hate will soon have outlived themselves, but the ideals for which the peoples and classes are con-



sciously fighting are, one and all of them, unrealizable. The world of tomorrow will be neither Bolshevik nor socialistic in quality, nor will it be Wilsonian, quite setting aside the superannuated hopes of the nationalists and imperialists. The possible net profit of this age will bear a character entirely different from any the aims at turnover lead to expect. According to the law of historic counterpoint its character may to a certain extent be construed: the extreme democratism of this period is doubtless paving the way for a new aristocratic era of history; the temporary victory of the blind mass is preparing a new juncture for high culture; the worship of quantity will end in reverence for quality, the rivalry of the nations in a Pan-European, if not a universal Western solidarity the like of which has not existed since the Middle Ages. What was aimed at by radicals will be realized by conservatives, as far as it was worth striving for. The ideals for which the masses at present fight, at best mean provisional embodiments of the will to renewal, which as yet is blind.

The explanation is simple enough: whenever humanity goes into convulsions, history becomes a blind process of Nature. As Nature spreads millions of germs for a few thousands to grow up to maturity, innumerable conflicting tendencies of mind and will must meet in such ages, most of which tendencies are born of passionate haste and short-sighted decision; for this reason, only a very few survive the time of revolution, and even then only survive in so far as they are capable of fundamental change. And since every human being has but *one* life to live, and moreover consumes himself with particular rapidity in times of fierce passions, it follows from this one consideration that the *same* persons who live for

turnover can only in exceptional cases be taken into account for the net profit. Therefore, there cannot in reason be any question of realizing what is needful on a large scale from the very outset; there can be as little question of this as of that other connected with it: how the persons who are at present influential, but who are already bound to a certain direction, can be changed in the sense we have found necessary: obviously another kind of human beings than those who exhaust themselves in turnover are necessary for the remaking of the world.

This remaking must take place independently of the process of destruction. But however slow or swift the process may be, within a few short decades the battles of this age will have been fought out, their aims will have been led *ad absurdum*, their champions be dead. A void would then be left, unless in the meantime, untouched by the strife of the day, the new had grown up which will one day take the place of the obsolete old conditions. This is the only way in which anything new ever grew up. Those who have grown old never get rejuvenated; even the mature do not change any more. But at the height of their maturity the old themselves put into the world the generation which shall later on oppose and ultimately replace them; a generation fitted for the task, for the very reason that the old kept them aloof from the strife of the day. Therefore, according to Chinese state-wisdom, the new does not begin to work at the death of the old, but, generally speaking, two-thirds of a man's lifetime prior to that period: its *maturity* only coincides with the visible manifestation.

What is needed now can only develop far from the strife of the day. From the historic point of view the transformation of the ruling majorities is of the least

importance today, because they will very soon have ceased to mean anything. Nothing new can enforce itself before its time has come. But when the time has come for what is now needed, it will find the road clear, *provided only that it is there at all* and has made use of the intervening time to prepare itself for its historic mission. As in this case, it is a question of nothing less than the development of a new and profounder type of man—that is to say, not only of a “growth” in contradistinction to some kind of “manufacturing,” but of a configuration the development of which premises a fundamental change from within of the existing type; the new type can, for a long time to come, only appear in a very few representatives. But that does not matter. When all the fighters of this period of transition will have perished, their number will be large enough to decide in history. Even if then they are not yet numerous, they will suffice: those who answer the purposes of what has at last been recognized as needful will then be *sought*. The *leaders* will be there, and they alone matter ultimately in all times. Things will take the course they have already once taken. What was the origin of the Middle Ages? Nobody can tell exactly. The chaos of the Wanderings of the Nations was after a certain time, yet as it were, quite suddenly replaced by its very opposite—by the most harmonious cosmos which ever graced Europe; in the course of time the Bolshevik superficiality of the Huns was succeeded by a determinant depth of Being never conceived up to that time. This was made possible by the circumstance that during the period of chaos there developed cells of men of a spirit different from the spirit venting itself in chaos—cells, which grew and increased in number in an atmosphere

of peace, which branched out and thus created a network at first invisible—until, ultimately, their descendants became visible to all in the form of a new flora overspreading everything and growing luxuriantly upon the ashes of a consumed past. To help toward the realization of this is the aim of the School of Wisdom.

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## II. Hindoo and Chinese Wisdom

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THE RE is no model, in the West, for a School of Wisdom as it has been founded at Darmstadt. It is true that there are religious communities, orders, esoteric associations of the most varied mental and psychological origin which aim at the cultivation of Being (I entirely leave out of consideration other kinds of educational institutions, whatever their program, because they cannot in any way serve as comparisons). But this is either taken in the religious sense, or else the way is expressly monopolized for select closed circles. These circumstances make for a fundamental difference between the intents above mentioned and our own. We have already shown in the chapter, "The New Union between Mind and Soul," in what sense everything depends upon *adjustment*. For this one reason the adjustment of the School of Wisdom, which intends to build up life anew from the basis of Significance, that is to say, from the basis of personal understanding, is altogether different from that of the institutions of any confessional religion, even though they possess the profoundest of insights; for, according to its specific character, none can lay the emphasis on understanding; every imaginable kind of religion is bent upon the creation or preservation of a determinate modality of life; therefore the norm, the dogma as such, must be its last resort and not the Meaning which supports it. And as to that other difference I have touched upon, which distinguishes the School of



Wisdom from the intents in themselves identical of closed circles, it lies in the fact that the closedness of these circles is their essential characteristic, whereas the characteristic of the School of Wisdom is what one may call the open angle. Here a profounder Sense-perception and a new invigoration of life are to be taught; and this concerns each and all: the members of all kinds of orders, in whose circles these very things cannot be learnt, as well as the independent free-thinker. Therefore it is altogether inconsistent with the very idea of the School of Wisdom to close the circle or to have anything to do with mystery. It is absolutely impossible to imagine any kind of doctrine the *meaning* of which should involve secrecy and accessibility only to the chosen few. Thus all religious orders were subsequently founded upon the wisdom Christ intended for humanity at large; the same is true of the Buddhistic doctrine no less than of the esoteric associations of Antiquity. The existence of closed circles is doubtless justified; but their *raison d'être* does not lie on the plane of Significance, it lies on that of the phenomena.<sup>1</sup> Such circles deal with materializations of Significance, which mean a limitation of the latter; their existence presupposes fixations, contrary to Significance as such. Now the ideal location of the School of Wisdom is the realm of Meaning; this is its fundamental originality, this is the basis of all its possible importance. Therefore, to repeat, it is something fundamentally different to any of the above-mentioned associations. The impulse it represents and imparts is, in principle, meant for each and all; the fact that practically not many may be qualified for it and that the

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<sup>1</sup> This trend of thought is treated in detail in the last cycle of lectures.

technique of training must bear an intimate character, does not change the fundamental state of affairs. For obviously it is a very different thing, whether the closing of a given circle means an essential characteristic or merely a matter of technique.

Thus the West offers no models for what we aim at in Darmstadt. But the East offers models even today; there, Being is in principle placed above ability and a sharp distinction is made between understanding and information. It is true that the aims of the Eastern Schools of Wisdom are not our own; the modalities of life in the West and in the East are so completely different that nothing concrete within those two modalities bears any kind of comparison. In accordance with our energy, mobility and activity, our future culture of Being will be of a character completely differing from any in the East.<sup>1</sup> And this much had best be said once and for all: the School of Wisdom does *not* mean to transplant Eastern Being to the Occident; my own personality vouches for that, for nobody who knows me ever so slightly will doubt its extremely Western, I may say far too Western character. Nevertheless, today the East and the East only can offer us a concrete symbol of what we aim at. Therefore I will now examine a few details of the wisdom of the Orient. I shall select only such as may serve to illustrate our own aims.

THE first point we have to deal with is this: that the Wisdom of the East never was a literally defined doctrine, nor is it today; it essentially represents pure Significance which as such is obviously capable of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the lecture, "*Ost und West auf der Suche nach der gemeinsamen Wahrheit*," in *Philosophie als Kunst*.

most diverse expressions in the phenomenal world. This is emphatically so in India. It is true that there is any amount of the worst scholasticism to be found there; it is true also that in India, too, worship of the letter has misinterpreted original symbols. But whoever wishes to be called a wise man in India must, *par définition*, be beyond name and form. The centre of his consciousness must be located on that highest storey of possible spiritual language, on which not the thoughts and images as such, but their meaning, represents the givenness as well as the starting-point. Owing to this attitude, the Hindoo rishi obviously stands far above all opinions and dogmata; from the basis of this attitude it was possible for Ramakrishna to test experimentally various religions by becoming their proselyte, and yet to remain true to his own at the same time; from the basis of this attitude the Hindoo scholar representing a certain philosophical system, which a German would consider as his last resort, is required to be capable, at any moment, of assuming the standpoint of the sixty-three (if I am not mistaken) other systems, and of thinking from their basis. It is in India alone that this profounder attitude expresses itself in theory. But the religious *practice* of the entire Orient has been unconsciously dominated by it, *and this is the true reason why all spiritual light which has hitherto shone on earth came from the East*. For there, and there alone, have none of the formations of the religious spirit from the point of view of their own creators ever meant their own last word.

All formations are limited by space and time and are therefore mortal; no particular doctrine can be even theoretically imagined as suited to all times because definitions can only be arrived at from the spirit of specific

means of expression and are, therefore, bound to the ideas current in a given sphere of culture; hence the meaning of the same expression is no longer the same as soon as these ideas have changed. Now the really spiritual and vital part of every formation is its Meaning; as soon as this is no more understood by means of the former, the latter no longer embodies vital truth. This is the important side of the question when seen from the point of view of the letter, and since the overwhelming majority never grasps more spirit than is offered by the mere means of expression, it follows that those changes of the forms of ideas and beliefs recorded by history are both justified and necessary.

Nevertheless, there have been Spirits whose teachings are recognized as true by all ages. What of them? They taught from such depths of Sense-perception that the meaning works *through* the letter and thus justifies in the form of symbols what, taken literally, would long since appear obsolete. This is true of all those Spirits we call immortal; even Plato's doctrine of the Ideas survives *in spite of*, not because of, its outward expression. And it is true in the highest sense of the great founders of religion. The reason why they have been able to influence the world throughout the thousands of years, in spite of thousands of varying interpretations, misunderstandings, confessions, reforms and rebirth, lies in the very fact that the Meaning they stood for was so profound that it did not appear necessarily tied to any mortal form. And this has been the case from the very beginning—it is not a case of a construction *a posteriori*. Even Jesus was not a Christian—not to mention the confessional freedom of the great Hindoos—although as an empirical personality, similar to Mohammed in this point,

He did not lack the Jewish worship of the letter called Christian today, and the fact that He was not a Christian was the *raison d'être* of His being inexhaustible. However unconsciously, Jesus personally lived beyond the plane of formations, and although He, too, had to create definite forms in order to express himself, it is this Beyond which was the "Light" that shone from him.

Now in contradistinction to us, the East recognizes as a self-evident fact that spiritual light—as is true, ultimately, of all life—*can* only come from a Beyond of the plane of formations. And since it always depends upon the plane of consciousness what layers of reality are revealed by the means of the spiritual organism, this one typical difference between adjustments of the East and the West suffices to explain why, in spite of an almost equal apportionment of spiritual gifts, spiritual light has hitherto only shone on earth from the East. For, to repeat, the one important thing is the depth of Significance in which consciousness is originally rooted. It is because the adjustment of the West is typically superficial that Hindoo wisdom so easily becomes superstition when professed by Westerners. As opposed to this, our Western knowledge uttered in its own language might express exactly the same depths as that of the East, *if we ourselves would become profounder*. What men think, believe and are capable of in the sense of "fact" is always unessential; the one thing that ultimately matters is what the empirical *means*, what it is founded upon, what are the depths from which man ensouls his life; in a word, *what he is*.

This is a truth with which the entire East is familiar. This is the reason why the East appears so unfathomably profound to us. This is the reason why all deepening



of life has proceeded from the East. But this consideration also suffices to show that this is not essentially a function of the specific nature of the Orient but a function of its depth of consciousness which we Westerners, too, should in principle be capable of reaching.

**B**UT how is the deepening, the development of the essential Being, which seems all-important, to be reached? At this point, too, India has thought out the way before us. I consider its creation of the concept of Dharma as one of the most important ethical accomplishments in the world's history. The concept of Dharma (not to be defined in itself because of its multiple shades of meaning) includes in *one* Sense-connexion every imaginable relation between the norm and individual law, between duties towards oneself and towards others, between religious and social ties on the one hand, and personal self-determination on the other. In a word, Dharma is the conceptual expression of the practical understanding *that for everyone there is only one way* leading to perfection. The meaning of the doctrine of Dharma is this: that for the understanding of every abstract idea, for the realization of every program, for the satisfaction of every possible ambition, a corresponding inner state is needed. *One must be inwardly prepared for what one undertakes*, whatever it may be; ultimately one is only justified in aspiring to an ideal conforming to one's personal inner reality.

This doctrine first found its outward frame in the caste system which even today, in spite of the scientifically untenable premises from which it originated and in spite of its mechanical and artificial character, satisfies the majority of Hindoos because its inherent content of in-

justice is annulled by the belief in a possible progress from one life to another, manifesting itself by means of the individual's continuous rebirth within successively higher castes. In the same sense, our mediæval caste system, which originated from the same metaphysical idea, did not awaken any class hatred so long as the world-philosophy was unshaken according to which everyone represented a necessary member within a supernatural connexion and all were equal before God. That the days of a mechanical caste system are now past everywhere is self-evident in an age of universal development of intellect, thanks to which the Ego must have personally grasped whatever is to become a vital force; and this is an advantage not only considering the empirical drawbacks and absurdities of the belief in castes, but in the absolute sense. The pristine connexion between matter and Spirit is in a state of increasing dissolution. A new order is developing, however slowly, according to which the *personal* quality of the individual alone decides. Yet this change does not lead to a disappearance of the idea of Dharma, but to its deepening; an imperfect embodiment of Meaning makes room for a better one. Nietzsche has prepared the way for it by his postulate that values of Being, organically graduated, should be determinant; that is to say, that quality should rule instead of quantity which decides today; the first futuristic sketch of the aristocratic hierarchy of the future is represented by Bolshevism, a particularly significant circumstance, because personally its leaders believe in numbers and masses and aim at the realization of socialist ideals. The fact is that if mankind wishes to progress, the rule of quality is the only possible thing. But quality is essentially an expression of Being, not of

ability, and "Being" can only be born, it cannot be manufactured. This, then, leads us back to the ancient idea of Dharma, according to which a man must be born to what he may do.

But at this third point in which the East may serve as an exemplar, Hindoo thinking itself leads beyond the limitations of the idea of the intrinsic value of birth: there is not only a physical birth, there is also a spiritual birth; and this last is the essential thing; the physical only represents the means for the spiritual birth and the only possible means for those only who are not strong enough to attain rebirth without passing through the gates of death. In principle, it is possible in the course of *one* life to progress beyond what one was in the sense of "Being." I will not here go into the special methods to attain this end indicated by the Hindoos. In the context of our present considerations I will only once more stress the essential point, namely that, in principle, where it is a question of progress, it is really a question of a change of inner state, of a raising of Being, and not of an increase and improvement of knowledge in the sense of information. Therefore, the Hindoo teaching that understanding means salvation must not on any account be interpreted in the Western and scientific sense. Understood aright, however, it is absolutely true. Every new understanding in the sense of a vital relationship—and that is the only one the Hindoo recognizes as understanding—presupposes a new and a higher state; Being is absolutely the last resort. Under these circumstances, every belief in equality appears, in principle, as contrary to sense. From a rational point of view, there can be only a question of equality of rights for human beings in so far as an equality actually exists; and this

is possible only as far as the mere basis of the personal life is concerned. As soon as the complex of questions relating to daily necessities, to elementary political activity and the possibility of education is passed, one is met by such immense differences of quality and level that, if the world were really determined by Significance, in every community claiming to be an organism and not a mere aggregate, with every new generation an equivalent of the ancient caste system should be reborn, for then only would quality always decide. It is very difficult to foretell how soon the political organism of the West will be renewed in the sense of this insight; but there is no doubt that the day will come. For the foundation of the new aristocracy of his dreams, Nietzsche hoped for a preceding era of socialistic convulsions; and at this very moment we are passing through it. . . .

But this I have only mentioned in passing. We will keep to the fundamental truth contained in the wisdom of the East and let it shed its light upon our way. Our last insight may also be worded thus: everybody has a right only to what he is inwardly prepared for; only those who are really equal may aspire to the same goals. As the ideal location of the School of Wisdom is in the realm of pure Significance independently of all particular formations, the idea of Dharma must be asserted in its most pregnant form within the frame of its workings; for thus only can it show the way toward a higher state. All claims to level and worth a person may make will in each case be mercilessly weighed without regard for self-love and vanity. Without reserve each disciple will first have to confess to himself his real state with all the possible consequences for his higher training this may in-

volve. And there they will have to acknowledge insurmountable differences between each other. Just as it is impossible to train an idiot to be a genius, or an unmusical person to be a musician, not everybody is qualified for the highest state of religiosity or morality. In this case, too, it is a question of endowments, which are either existing or lacking, with this difference only that vital longing, where it is strong enough, creates the non-existing—a fact to which Pascal's sentence refers: *Tu ne me chercherais pas, si tu ne m'avais déjà trouvé*. The longing for something better, in its turn, is only awakened by the confession of the real state; he only, who has the courage to do this, and at the same time possesses the power of longing, can progress beyond the state in which he found himself. This fact, then, results in a hierarchy of possibilities no less rigorous, perhaps more rigorous even, than that of the Hindoo castes. This is the first thing the disciple of Wisdom will have to resign himself to. He must first reach the state in which he makes the sacrifice willingly and without resentment. Unless he has attained to this first stage, there can be no question of his rising any higher. The state of mind which makes this inward sacrifice possible is the modern equivalent of Christian humility. But the sacrifice soon finds its rich reward. Whoever has made it in the right spirit soon reaps the blessings of Krishna's teaching in the Bhagarat-Gita: "Better to fulfil one's own Dharma, be it ever so lowly, than another's Dharma, be it ever so illustrious." For the principal impediment of inward progress vanishes as soon as the untruthful attitude toward life, the coward's attitude toward oneself, the illusion, the envy, are given up. All at once man finds himself free.



And then he discovers that, in reality, he *cannot* from within aspire to any concrete ideal lying far beyond his possibilities and that it is only envy and cowardice which tempt him to do so. If a man has understood himself aright, he inevitably is content with the stage to which he is at best capable of ascending according to his gifts.

And here all apparent harshness of the hierarchic order vanishes. Its apparent rigidity resolves itself into what religion calls the Order of Divine Grace in contradistinction to the order of merit. Again and again have criminals turned into saints; Christianity assigns the precedence in the realm of Grace to the lowly: all this means that the willing acceptance of one's own Dharma sets free forces giving a wonderful impetus to the process of inner growth. Again, it is a Hindoo legend which most beautifully symbolizes the meaning of the facts we have specialized; I present it as it has lived on in my memory—it may be that my mind has secretly cast into a new poetic mould what I heard on the banks of the Ganges long ago. Indra, the god, was travelling through the forest. There he met a penitent whom long years of castigation and meditation had almost changed into the stump of a tree. Dolorously he asked the god: How long must I yet practise so that I may be free?—Ten more years, answered the god.—Full ten years? the other sighed. And having thus complained, he was precipitated into hell.—As he wandered on, god Indra came upon a penitent of slight spirituality who hoped to attain salvation by dancing around a tree unceasingly. Sighting the god, he asked: How long must I go on practising till I may enter Nirvana?—It will take you a hundred thousand years, smiled the deity.—Only one hundred thousand years? cried the

penitent exultingly.—And no sooner had the shout of joy left his lips than he went up to heaven a liberated soul.

THUS there is a possibility of progress; there are ways to a higher development not only of ability, but also of Being; ways of changing the latter into a means of expression of profounder Significance. The East knows them since the days of remote Antiquity. And such ways exist not only for the individual, but also for communities. In this case it is not India, but China which offers the hitherto unequalled exemplars. Just as the West has created the highest culture of Ability, ancient China has created the highest universal culture of Being hitherto known. Its spirit is determinant even today. Even today it seizes everybody capable of understanding who stays in China for any length of time. Whoever starts to judge from external facts, which have really grown very unsatisfactory, appears superficial. It is true that all the disadvantages of routine are unusually conspicuous in the Central Kingdom; it is also true that the conservative basic disposition of the nation has led to an unparalleled rigidity which, on the other hand, is now in a state of the most radical disintegration—nevertheless even today Chinese life produces the effect of greater profundity than any other; even today it has a living background which ours lacks. Whence this state of superiority?

It is the result of the *one* insight which forms the basis of Chinese community life, *that whoever wishes to better external conditions must begin by improving the inner man.*

Whereas the modern West thought it possible to improve life from without, China up to the time of its revolution recognized as an indisputable truth that the human world is determined from within, that absolutely all historical phenomena depend upon Being. Perfect men can make life beautiful by means of the worst institutions, imperfect men not even by means of the best. All ideals must first be realized inwardly.

Is it not so? In this very age all purely abstract ideology leads itself *ad absurdum*. If the world is to become communistic, all human beings must first have become angels—otherwise, as bitter experience is showing again and again, the outward approach of reality to the ideal makes it worse instead of improving it; if the world is to become a world of peace everlasting, its inhabitants must first have grown inwardly beyond war; if a nation disarms from mere cowardice or compassion it leads to the supremacy of these two qualities, not to mention the fact that it heightens the lust of war in those who have remained armed. Whoever condemns attack must at the same time condemn flight; for the latter necessarily steels the courage of the enemy so that what was given up on the one side develops to a heightened degree on the other. He only who is prepared to die for the sake of peace has a right to think himself a better man as a pacifist than as a militarist. The outward appearance of the world exclusively depends on the inner state of man. Pure theory changes nothing, but every reality of inner experience (*Erlebnis*) in the long run creates a corresponding external reality. Therefore no proofs or abstract considerations will make the psychic formations of hate born out of the madness of the World War disappear: they are powers no less real

than any visible living being; one day they will die out, and their death can be accelerated; but as long as they live they will go on working. The outward appearance of the world mirrors the inner state of man not always from the outset, but all the more certainly in the long run; a world of today generally truthfully reflects the character of those who lived a generation earlier.

Thanks to the strangely hierarchic disposition of the Chinese and their particular philosophy of nature, this insight is often expressed in a way which seems grotesque to us. When the ruler has put his person in order, the saying goes, then it will also rain at the right moment. But whether or not the expression is more or less satisfactory in our eyes is not the important thing, if it has made the Chinese capable of Sense-realization; and this it has done. The fundamental insight that Being conditions the phenomena, and not *vice versa*, is the basis of that grand system of Confucius which for two thousand years has made possible the most harmonious community life of the greatest number of human beings ever known; it is the very soul of the externally questionable doctrine, namely, that morality is the basic force of the world. For morality in China is not understood as the external performance of duty, but as the expression of a Being altogether accordant with Significance. In so far morality is understood in China in a profounder sense than anywhere else. And—according to our former insight that Meaning and expression are correlatives—this deeper understanding has created a better reality than our own. Whereas in Europe moralism and the cult of duty have had a mechanizing effect, its Chinese equivalent has, on the contrary, made all governmental apparatus unnecessary to an unheard-of

degree. Confucius taught: an empire can exist without an army; an empire can exist without sufficient food: but it cannot exist without faith. And there he has shown more insight than our own political philosophers, and for this very reason what he has founded has proved more enduring. For faith actually is the only absolutely real tie keeping human beings together, both directly and indirectly. It is precisely our own time which most clearly shows this to be a fact because its process of disintegration lays bare the roots. Wherever the leaders have lost the confidence of the people, they are done for, in spite of all machinery that apparently supported or still supports them; as opposed to this, Lenin, elected on the basis of a political constitution not recognizing any sovereign power at all, *de facto* wielded greater power than any tsar ever possessed. In community life faith means the same as gravity in the world of the dead bodies; it is the *conditio sine quâ non* of its existence. Thus even the rate of exchange and the gold standard itself ultimately depend on faith alone.

Knowing this and having organized its external life for thousands of years on the basis of this fundamental insight, China requires a far smaller machinery than we do; the same is true of England as compared with continental Europe, and for the very same reasons. It is because of this that it appears practical and expedient in China not to appraise man as though he were a machine. In the modern West nobody thinks about inner worth; wealth, numbers, ability, party membership, world philosophy, rank are decisive. As opposed to this, Confucius taught, "The noble one is no tool." And furthermore, "A noble man living a life of simple truth and sincerity can bring peace to the whole world."



What a man does is far less essential, according to the teaching of Confucius, than his mere existence; but its worth, again, is measured by the worth of his Being. For Being has a direct effect like every force upon its own plane; it works itself out quite naturally without conscious effort. Thus the Emperor Shun only sat there with his face turned toward the south, and there was perfect harmony on earth. One should not here misunderstand the Chinese sage: the emphasis in the last sentence does not lie on the fact that Shun did nothing, but on the fact that his existence meant more than all his activities; his higher Being gave a meaning and a direction not only to his own actions, but to those of his subjects as well. In so far Shun also represents the ideal of any great man of action: only that ability which is completely ensouled by Being has a creative influence. For this reason the personal quality of the director as such is ultimately decisive also on the plane of technical enterprise; according to this quality the works and plants appear ensouled in one sense or another. The fact is that the influence of men is the most important motive power. In the same sense the Chinese doctrine of "not-acting" should not be misunderstood: it is this very doctrine which makes the theory of the supremacy of Being signally productive of good. Confucius taught: In order to win the world, one must have none of the qualities of the hustler. If one remembers the immense amount of good work done without the least success by German politicians in the last decades, it will be clear at once in what sense the words of the sage are meant to be understood: all success depends on the setting of goals true to Sense. But this is decided upon in the still depths of a layer of Being within which there

is no question of any particular activity. Only when the man who ultimately decides has grasped the problem at the intersection of the angle, as we put it in "The Creation of the Best-possible World," does the technical part work successfully according to Sense.

Thus, rightly understood, Chinese wisdom teaches nothing but a life based upon a profounder range of consciousness than the West typically starts from; their political doctrines are issued from the fourth Storey of Language, as we called it. Hence they must be differently expressed, hence the phenomena they outwardly affect have a different meaning. Thus Chinese peaceableness means something altogether different from our Western pacifism. Their true meaning can best be understood by means of the co-ordinates of two sayings, the first originating from Confucius, the second from Lao-tse. The former taught, "To attack false doctrines only does harm." The latter professed the principle, "Act without arguing." This is none other than the doctrine of Christ, couched in terms more philosophical and at the same time more statesman-like, that one should offer no resistance to evil. Why not? Because one only strengthens it by resistance. This is certainly not true on the plane of facts; here there is but one way to conquer evil, namely by fighting it. *But it cannot really be vanquished on this plane.* "If hate is answered by hate," Buddha asked, "when is hate ever to end?" And evil is not only promoted by the fact that it lives on by transference, *the principle of violence* in itself is evil,<sup>1</sup> a truth which is not changed in the slightest degree by its necessity within the economy of

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the paragraph "In Yellowstone Park" in *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher*.

the world, nor by the possibility of making it subservient to the highest and best. In so far one may say that on the plane of conflict evil is necessarily stronger than the good; this would be the real meaning of the mediæval teaching that Satan is the sovereign of this world. It follows, furthermore, that whoever engages in strife, thereby strengthens evil; the principle of violence *as such* is furthered, no matter in whose service it may be. The conqueror in war becomes militaristic; the vanquished burns for revenge. The evil means which were employed react upon him who used them. Nor is this all: until the attacked has been annihilated, his forces grow, owing to the very attack. First he summons up all his strength in order to keep the enemy in check; then this very fact gathers friends and partisans around him; they, in their turn, are strengthened in their attitude by the fight; the masses take sides and, since there always exist many diverging opinions, every brave man is sure of adherents if public opinion singles him out at all. Therefore, those who live a public life rate *every* attack an asset.

Now if this is really so—and it is indeed—then strife under all circumstances increases the sum of evil, no matter who triumphs. Then, in reality, it is impossible to conquer an evil by fighting it. This conquest can succeed only in another way. This can best be understood by a consideration of some facts of practical experience and of these, two seem to be of particular interest here: the first is that the only well-tried way of putting an end to attacks is simply to ignore them; the second, that what gains the final victory in war or argument (mere material overwhelming never means final victory) is something different from violence in

itself: it is the moral or spiritual power which employs it. Under these circumstances the only right thing to do, if it is at all possible, is to refrain from arguing or fighting, and only to cultivate the thing desired as such. This is just what Lao-tse means by his principle of acting without arguing. In the case of concrete Good or concrete Evil, it is a question of real vital forces which must be treated as such. Whatever is sown, whatever is cultivated, whatever is vitalized, grows: this is true in the first instance of Evil and its practice. But it is likewise true of the Good; this must be cultivated *without argument or fight* with what opposes it. Good can only triumph by independently growing to such a power (while at the same time evil loses as much strength for want of nourishment) that the good naturally preponderates in the end; thus only—and Christ fundamentally taught the same thing—is Evil finally vanquished by the Good. For this reason all saints advised their disciples against the risk of premature exposure to temptation; for this reason are children guarded against evil influences. I repeat: once there are strong and evil powers at work, they must be weakened by fight as much as possible. Once the plane of strife has been entered, all yielding only means weakness, but there can be no question of vanquishing Evil on this plane. Therefore, strife must be avoided wherever it is possible. Of all states those are in principle most secure from attacks which, though their will to hold their own is not to be doubted, seem to have no intention to attack because they do not arm more than is absolutely necessary for defence. Any increased preparations for war always produce the effect of an intended attack, no matter what the nation in question may really mean; and in the long run it develops

into such an intention because the impression produced reacts on him who made it, a circumstance which at a certain point necessarily leads to the conviction that attack is the best defence. Therefore, even purely practical considerations, if followed out far enough, lead to the conviction of Jesus that in the long run the earth belongs to the meek.

But its real reason lies on a deeper plane. He only is capable of a normal and lasting attitude excluding the intention of attack who is *inwardly* beyond all fighting. He only who has reached this point is outwardly beyond it. But then he is not outwardly beyond it in the sense only that he himself no longer attacks, *but that he, too, is no longer attacked*: his Dharma is transformed from that of the warrior into that of the Brahman. (That he is persecuted by his antipodes and is then easily annihilated has a different reason: it lies in the necessary tragic contrast between light and darkness and in the natural preponderance of Evil upon earth, and does not alter the truth of our statement. For that only comes to pass when the peaceful or meek, as Christ called them, have grown so far beyond the human state that their existence creates a new hostile tension.) Now they act upon life from another and a profounder layer of spirit and correspondingly different forces emanate from them. When Jesus offered the left cheek, He did not do so in a cowardly manner, He brought a force into play which was superior to that of His opponents'. In the same sense everybody feels that when Quakers, religiously the most advanced of Occidentals, refuse to serve in the army, they do so not from cowardice: with them Good *has* already vanquished Evil, a fact also proved by their wonderfully beneficial effects.



Now if Good is unceasingly cultivated among all human beings and Evil is ignored as much as possible, then ill-intentioned conflict will finally become impossible because of the balance of powers within the soul. Just as conflicts leading to duels are the rarer, the better the people behave as a matter of course; just as under normal circumstances there would be no question of insults if he who insults another were *ipso facto* considered as dishonourable, just so war might almost completely disappear if a corresponding inner culture were reached. But this could only happen under that one condition. This condition was nearer its fulfilment among the Chinese than among all other nations. This is the meaning of their peaceableness. The Chinese are (or were) inwardly further than we are. Even so, ethical progress is to be realized only in this one way: that the Good grows up *independent of* and *without conflict with* the Evil. And this is true of nations as well as of individuals. It is true that the Good is fully steeled and developed and tested only by conflict, but it must grow first; this is the decisive point. But if the Good grows up thus without interference from without, *then it is sure of ultimate victory*. Here we have found a deeper explanation of the insight gained in the preceding chapter—that in political life a distinction must be made between turnover and net profit and that those who work for the future should not take part in the strife of today. Here we have the counterpart of the truth that Satan is the rightful Sovereign of the World and at the same time we hold the key to the meaning of all myths promising ultimate victory to the Good on the Day of Judgment. Whereas on the plane of conflict Evil is necessarily stronger than the Good,

the very opposite is true on the plane of essential Being. On this plane no conflict is possible; either one is or one is not. Being in itself is something altogether positive, something absolute, founded in itself. In the case of *good* Being this is raised to yet higher power, because the Good, too, like Being, is something absolute which pours forth its gifts without an object, something originally superior to all disharmony. Under these circumstances good Being must necessarily be superior to Evil, *because Evil only lives on and by conflict* and cannot therefore independently exist on the plane of Being. In so far it never has an absolute existence. Therefore the Good, whenever it is present as a real power, is ultimately beyond all competition. According to the aforesaid, this circumstance cannot become evident on the plane of the day's conflict; on the contrary: here Evil *must* triumph. But beyond that plane, the Good manifests its greater power even in history, in so far as Evil is compelled ever more to serve ever profounder Significance. Thus Christ has proved stronger than the Roman Empire. Thus what is evil in itself is compelled to fight for increasingly higher ideals, or what might at least be higher ideals. Those who are weak in a worldly sense, really in the long run incarnate the strongest power, provided another, a metaphysical force forms the background of their weakness. This is the meaning of that strange teaching of Lao-tse, according to which the weak are stronger than the strong, the soft firmer than the hard, the fluid have more power of resistance than the firm. The positive must develop independently; but this, again, is only possible when as such it does not engage in conflict—that is to say, when it does not offer itself as an object for argument, no matter in what other way

it may act. This is the reason—to throw a light for once on intellectual conditions as well—why all creative spirits are averse to discussion.<sup>1</sup>

IN CHINA, thanks to the wonderful practical insight of the profound spirits which have determined its history, the Good has developed of its own accord. These profound spirits have from the outset rooted Chinese life in depths of Significance which no nation of the West has ever known. Hence, to return to our well-tried simile, there the alphabetical letters of all life express a profounder meaning than they do in the West. For this reason, and not for external ones, precisely the inferior classes in China were in a state of highest culture; it is because of this that among the cultured ranks a depth of Sense-understanding is the rule which with us only characterizes rare men of genius. The whole of China normally lives on the Fourth Storey of Language. There, that teaching of Lao-tse is understood (and acted upon) without difficulty, which runs thus: "Whoever pierces all things with a clear eye, may well do without information." What is essential is Sense-perception, not branch knowledge; the necessary specialists can be hired wherever they are required. Whoever is capable of Sense-understanding will in each case intuitively perceive what specialists he needs and in what direction he must employ them. But he alone can show them the goal. The whole of Chinese political wisdom proceeds from the understanding not only *that* leadership is the most essential thing, but what it really means. That we have no true leaders,

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<sup>1</sup> One should compare with the last sentence the central argument of the Introduction to *America Set Free*.

because we do not understand this last, has been shown in another context. We recognize true leaders outside ourselves as little as the qualities of leadership within ourselves. A modern Chinese, Ku Hung-Ming, has said a few things to the point, well worth considering (in *Vox Clamantis*, Leipzig, 1921, p. 24): "There are three stages or degrees of anarchy. Its first degree is when a land has not got a really capable good king. The second degree is when the people of a land openly or tacitly does not believe in royal power. The third and worst degree is reached when the people of a land does not only not believe in royal power, but not even in royal qualities—indeed, when it grows altogether incapable of recognizing royal qualities or human value in man. It seems to me that Europe and America are rapidly approaching this final and worst stage of anarchy."

In this observation also the Chinese basic theme sounds through, namely that everything depends on personal superiority; with personal superiority everything is possible, without it nothing can be achieved. What must absolutely be conquered is inferiority. Therefore Lao-tse could quite naturally anticipate the results of latter-day moral criticism. He taught, "The Great Significance was abandoned, so there came to be morality and duty." Indeed, external ties are necessary only where inner bearing (in the sense of the French *tenue*) is lacking. For him who at all times fully grasped Significance and lived in accordance with it, problems of morality would no longer exist, and yet his life would conform to the demands of the highest morality. Why is there the saying that morality is always a matter of course? Because to one half it still belongs to the order

of nature; that is to say, to the region of grammar and not of Significance. The laws of morality define the general possibilities of a propitious community life; they define the minimum.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, obedience to them is firstly indispensable, secondly a matter of course, but thirdly, it no longer means a last resort for anyone who has grasped Significance. Thus the great poet may, as an exception, do violence to language and its laws. Truly, everything depends on the higher culture and the deepening of the inner man. Only if and as long as the men of the greatest inner value decide, does the universal level appear raised. In every age, the men of the greatest value are always those who represent the highest degree of Sense-perception and Sense-realization. This degree appears extremely different in accordance with the calibre of the personalities just living. This is the reason why the world is no better than it is. This is the reason why the level of humanity rises and sinks according to the influences which rule the peoples.

ALL education in the East is immediately directed towards Sense-understanding, which, as we have seen before, is the only way that can be shown as leading to a raising of the level of essential Being. In this point China does not occupy a unique position. In India, the sage must be beyond name and form. The Japanese statesmen even today seek their training among the Zen-monks. The traditionalism of the whole East which appears so strange to us, and the extraordinary length

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<sup>1</sup> On ethics in the profounder sense and social morality compare the chapter, "Man and Mankind," in *Immortality*, 3rd edition, Darmstadt, 1920.



of time its youth is schooled with the same books, can only be understood when we remember that its aim is Sense-perception and the embodiment of Significance in life; there, years and years the same teachings are meditated upon. The meaning of this is best shown by the following explanation given by Confucius: "Him who does not strive for himself, I do not assist; to him who does not struggle for the expression, I do not reveal it; if I show one corner to a man and he knows not how to apply it to the three remaining corners, I do not repeat my teaching." (According to the legends, the Hindoo rishis showed an even greater lack of complaisance.) But he was quite right; whoever really has the welfare of his disciples at heart should act in the same sense. *The essential thing is not information, but understanding*, and understanding can be attained only by personal creative application. At this point we can grasp in a profounder sense one of the insights we had gained in the preceding chapter. Sense-perception always means *giving a thing a meaning*; the dimension of Significance lies in the direction from within to the outside. Therefore, knowledge (in the sense of information) and understanding in reality, bear the same relationship to each other as nature and Spirit. Information is gained from without to the inside; understanding is a creative process in the opposite direction. Under these circumstances, there is no direct way leading from one goal to the other. One may know everything without at the same time understanding anything at all. And that is precisely the pass to which our education, that aims at a hoarding of information, has brought the majority. There has probably never been a humanity understanding so little as present-day man-

kind with its exceeding wealth of information. On the contrary, the youth in the East is only taught a very small amount of material knowledge, but he must understand it, and if he has thus really understood, however little, he is superior to anybody who is rich in mere information. There can be no doubt that the aim of the Orient in this case is the absolutely higher one. Therefore its methods are most worthy of consideration. Since understanding can only be a result of creative application, time obviously plays a more important part than where the mere amassing of information is concerned: the former is a matter of organic growth. Talent may accelerate the process; on the other hand, time can to a certain extent replace talent, as is proved by the typical wisdom of old age. Therefore, as the sentence quoted from Kungfutse shows most clearly, the principal task of the teacher in the East is to say or do nothing that may cause a relaxation of personal exertion. Personal understanding in contradistinction to external knowledge is, furthermore, advanced by the peculiar aphoristic Sutra-style of Hindoos which *requires* a commentary by the reader; it is likewise promoted by the unheard-of shortness of the Chinese ways of expression. Explanations are not given, *in order* to develop understanding. Up to now we are doing the very opposite. And yet the effects of the incomprehensible which have, again and again, been proved should by now have shown even us Occidentals the way to better insight. That most indigestible book of Mrs. Baker-Eddy has doubtless set more forces in motion than any scholarly scribbling. It is true that the *attraction* of the incomprehensible is mostly the result of the belief in the miraculous; but its strong *effects* have another reason;

the incomprehensible excites the wish to understand, and this wish in the long run necessarily leads to understanding. Thus one may arrive at true meaning through something completely meaningless; thanks to this circumstance one may learn more through the meditative reading of a cookery-book than by the reading of Goethe's *Faust* as it is generally done. The genius of language is so great, that to meditate upon mere words leads to profound understanding, as the experience of all religions teaches (though this phenomenon is mostly misunderstood and interpreted as the intrinsic effect of magic formulæ). Understanding is always the result of personal effort only. Under these circumstances, demonstrations of truth evidently are not ultimately important, for they make personal exertion unnecessary. Hardly any concentration is required in order to follow a demonstration—one simply yields to the inherent momentum of formal logic. On the other hand, no more can ever be proved than could also be perceived without proofs. No demonstration can lead further than to obviousness; and though it is a fact that every truth, as far as it is logical, must be demonstrable, intuition, in principle, is capable of understanding it directly. The power of perceiving things as a whole depends only on the degree of profoundness; the deeper a man is rooted in spirit, the more he knows and recognizes directly. Thus we have come to the apparently paradoxical conclusion that our Western way of trying to prove everything advances science but makes man superficial; in order to follow up its mechanical way no profounder personal thinking is required. For this very reason our culture has become a culture of Making-all-things-easy, on the impulse of present-day

mass-rule it is assuming this character to such an extent that all higher spirituality threatens to be destroyed by it. In the end, there may remain nothing but mere information, and no understanding whatever. . . .

This state of things must be fought. The culture of Making-all-things-easy must be opposed by a culture of Taking-things-all-the-more-seriously, similarly to counterpoint in music. Those only who take great pains will pass the *examen rigorosum* of this epoch of destruction and will count as cells of reconstruction. At this point we have returned to our personal task. The East possesses an exemplary way to the very thing we need, to the deepening, to the leavening of knowledge with understanding. Therefore, in this respect, the School of Wisdom will bear an Eastern and not a Western character. According to the peculiar nature of the thing, far higher demands must be made here than anywhere else. Its principal task, which is much more of an ethical than of an intellectual nature, will be precisely to make higher demands. Nevertheless, in spite of this Eastern orientation of the way, its goal is absolutely a Western goal; I wish to repeat this fact in order to prevent as far as possible future misunderstandings which are sure to arise. Its goal is absolutely Western, particularly in so far as the emphasis will have to be laid on the personal and because this must be done to an extent the East has never known. Eastern wisdom does not know free personality in our sense of the word. It got its final shape at a time when the type still completely dominated the individual. The free agent it develops is metaphysically free, but not in the sense of a unique personal expression. This leads to a fundamental difference between the schools of the East and

ours, not only as to the goal, but also as to the way. As a conclusion to these considerations I will try to make clear this difference by comparing the Eastern method of learning with the manner in which I teach my disciples to read. The disciple of Confucius becomes absorbed in the writings of his master, until the latter has entirely taken possession of him. It is true that every Occidental, too, must first learn to read in this sense, or else the necessary organs of understanding will never develop at all. But as soon as this is achieved I say to him: "Of what interest are other people's thoughts to you? You wish to find out your own truth. Read the thoughts of others, of course, but read *through* them. If a book interests you, don't ask what the writer may have intended to say and don't on any account ask yourself what your attitude is regarding it—by defining your position, you only bind yourself to your temporary limitations—but rather interpret the fact of your interest as a correspondence of what you yourself mean in your inmost soul without as yet being able to express it. You are sure to be right in your interpretation, for whatever finds a living echo within your soul must have for you a personal meaning, no matter what it is. Now if you become absorbed in the writings of another with the intention of finding yourself, then this other man will be to you a means of self-realization. You should never content yourself with a truth unless it has become to you a personal insight. If you assume the attitude I have pointed out to you, you may read everything that interests you: everything and anything will advance your inward growth. Then you may confidently yield to the natural rotation of your interests: it will of necessity lead you to yourself. Then you need not even



fear periods of so-called superficiality, for all surface will become a symbol of depth for you. Thus a man may under certain circumstances arrive at the realities of his own depth through the superficiality of another." We must, then, give to all Eastern methods a new interpretation. For, to repeat, with all its essential depth the East is tied to specific conditions in its expression; there the type dominates, as it did with us in the Middle Ages, and not free individuality. We, however, will and must bring forth absolutely independent personalities.

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### III. *Wisdom Ancient and Modern*

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THE last word of the preceding chapter was a confession to Occidentalism. The East, taken as a whole, offers us a symbolic model and there are many particular things we can and should take over from it—yet the *way* we must go can only be one which is in accordance with our own essential nature. Therefore, an introduction into the aims of the School of Wisdom would be imperfect unless, after having shown the abstract goal and its relation to other aims and intentions, it lays bare the historic roots of our own aims and thus discloses the necessary relationship between the present and its origin. For whenever anything new on earth appears to be both in accordance with Sense and capable of practical realization, it has been predetermined from time immemorial. The course of the historic process is tremendously slow. For hundreds and thousands of years the same problems always re-emerge; they only cease to be posited when they have been finally solved—and how many have been solved since the days of the Genesis? It is true that each generation which deals with them draws nearer to their solution, be it only in the sense that it follows out a wrong track to its very end. But since stupidity and inertia always command the greater numbers; since it lies in the nature of things that they should offer the strongest and most energetic resistance precisely to the innovation in harmony with the spirit of the age; since no spiritual acquisition can

be considered as acquired for good until it has conquered the living prejudices hostile to it—appallingly little is achieved at once and for the many. Practically, a new truth triumphs no quicker on the spiritual plane than on that of politics, however much the position of the spiritual man seems to be otherwise favorable as compared with that of the statesman, because the thoughts he opposes cannot as such offer any resistance; once they are logically vanquished, they are completely vanquished in principle: the fact is that a new truth must have become *self-evident* in order to triumph on the vital plane, and this never happens before a majority has come to recognize it, a majority sufficiently strong to be able to attract the great numbers for reasons of prestige. Thus, for centuries Christianity had to fight the antique religions; thus within Catholicism the struggle between personal recognition and recognition founded on belief in authority has not even today been fought out in favor of the former; thus Hegel's Panlogism was dominant for several decades, until it degenerated into an absurd materialism which is not even today historically done for on all planes (it is on the intellectual, but not on the political plane). But this very slowness of the development on the plane of cultural history is, on the other hand, the reason why the connexion with the historic roots remains so strong; for this very reason one never outgrows them, nor can one ever deny them without severing oneself from the mysterious super-individual organism, which means severing oneself from Life itself. Everything new absolutely presupposes the whole of the old belonging to the same line of development. We have already seen that progress in the realm of ab-

stract ideas becomes essential progress only when it has incarnated in a corresponding change of state. Such a change being a process of growth, it cannot possibly take place quickly, nor can it possibly skip any organic stage of evolution; it is bound to predetermined phases and lines of development exactly as the embryo. This is the reason why even on the spiritual plane all crosses between things which are not inwardly related produce the effect of hybridism; this is the reason why every sufficiently strong new impulse first calls out chaotic phenomena of fermentation. In so far, by the way, nothing means so great a retardation of development as war and revolution.

Our spiritual roots are located in Antiquity and not in the Orient. Therefore it is only right that the Occidental education to "humanity" should start with Greek and Latin: however different the peoples which have since become determinant in history, on the spiritual plane there is an unbroken continuity. And this continuity appears particularly striking because as soon as one deducts the decades and centuries in which nothing new occurred, the real history of the Spirit seems quite short: looking back from modernity to what preceded it, one has reached down to classic Antiquity before one knows where one is. This is true in particular of our own aims: what has been founded at Darmstadt is a *direct* continuation of antique volition. Therefore I could find no better way of a final introduction into our aims than to trace down to these, by means of a survey of the resultants of all particular movements, the impulse which first took shape in Hellas. If we follow up this movement from the very first moment of its

dawning, its possible final goal will become all the more definite and clear.

AS SOON as the Greek sages awoke to original self-consciousness (a thing the earliest who were very dependent on Asia and Egypt possessed in only a moderate measure) they at once differed in one essential respect from those of the East we considered in the preceding chapter: consciously they were not "ful-fillers," but "seekers." For this reason, Socrates has remained their prototype and symbol for all posterity. It is true that the pre-Socratic philosophers corresponded better than he did to the concept of the sage; it is also true that what he intended and represented had already been historically active before him; it is true, further, that there has been at least *one* greater philosopher after him—the divine Plato. But with Socrates a new type becomes determinant in the history of the human Spirit, a type which never existed in the East and which never before or since appeared in so typical an embodiment, for which reason he involuntarily became the standard for every subsequent concept of the nature of the Greek philosopher: the sage as a man who consciously does *not* know, not as one who knows.

Obviously the Oriental sage, too, did not know most things; but that was not the thing on which he laid the emphasis: his aim was *the realization* of the truth he had gained and possessed. As opposed to this, Socrates desired perpetually to gain new contents of knowledge. Thus, by shifting the stress of importance, he at the same time changed the goal: his way of positing the problem made Knowledge, not Being, ultimately important; and Knowledge understood in the sense of



theory at that. Thus, Socrates became the inventor of what we mean by the word "concept," the discoverer of method, of the importance of the correct way of positing a problem and ultimately the father of exact science. Accordingly, scientific research has ever since with a better conscience chosen him as a starting-point than Plato, although not he, but Aristotle must be considered as the first scientist in the modern sense. Yet Socrates was not *only* the father of theory as an aim in itself—that is to say, the Father of what, since Nietzsche, one is beginning to call Western unwisdom, thus characteristically reversing the emphasis once more: he was at the same time a true sage, the embodiment of a life determined by understanding. His idea of stressing the importance of theory in the scientifically exact sense was not the result of curiosity or self-rooted desire for knowledge, it was a result of the fact that the unsophisticated wholeness of life of the ancestral ages was disintegrated; hence his idea was a true child of true wisdom. The old gods were in the throes of death, mortally wounded by emancipated intellect. The latter now behaved in an utterly irresponsible manner. The sophists would prove anything they pleased, they would refute anything that came into their heads and they would not believe in any binding truth. In order to put an end to these destructive activities, Socrates as a truly great *Realpolitiker* of the Spirit saw but one sure means—to make intellect responsible. Through the new ties thus created he hoped to lay, upon a higher plane of understanding, a new foundation for the wholeness of life. That this was his true aim is conclusively proved by his conviction that it should be possible to teach virtue by means of intellectual insight.

But his age was not yet ripe for the task of solving the problem set by him. As its intellectuality was not even approximately far enough developed to reconstruct life purely out of itself, Socrates could do nothing but accelerate the process of disintegration, wherever he aimed at transforming its forces into constructive powers. Thus he was finally sentenced to death, convicted as guilty of having exerted a disrupting influence; thus during the first centuries he continued to act, for the most part, as a disintegrating influence, or at least as a disrupter of the wholeness of life. This is a most remarkable and very instructive fact for those especially who believe in rapid progress. Socrates already had the typical defect of our own age: the centre of gravity of his life did not rest upon Being, but on an externalized world of representations; he already lacked the self-evident knowledge, the sure instinct of the perfectly balanced man; he, too, no longer had a direct relationship to the *inner* spiritual world; even he sought to enter it from without. The problem of Socrates was, therefore, literally already the same as ours. But since from the point of view of its possible solution, as we can judge better today, he posited that problem not only decades, but centuries too early, his fate had to be one of tragic guilt. For this reason the image of Socrates has fascinated the thinking West as no other ever has. Within its history it means something similar to the image of Prometheus in the history of the development of mankind: it is a primal symbol which ever since makes every European consciously feel the Socratic problem to be his own. Most of what distinguishes our history from that of other cultures relates back to him. By his hypostatizing of conceptual determinations, a

thing from which metaphysical prudence always guarded the Hindoos, Socrates became the father of the specifically Occidental belief in the absolute reality of the external, a materialism which only reached its zenith in the world-philosophy of the dying nineteenth century. He is the father of all abstract idealism, the historic model of the way of thinking according to which logically incontestable proof creates accepted reality, for which, accordingly, indirect knowledge ranges above the direct. Thus, Socrates is the true exemplar of the most modern Western type.

But his Western, and to that extent exemplary, character is perhaps most clearly expressed in the nature of his immortality. The immortality of all great philosophers of the West, as contrasted with the immortality of those of the East, is one not of Being, but of Becoming; it is less that their figure as such lives on than that the movement, first incarnated in them, continues to *act*. The great Hindoos and Chinese have struck eternal basic notes, as it were, to which the whole of humanity may attune itself; what kind of melody was played did not interest them, nor was it of any account on the level of consciousness they had attained; their truth, as far as it exists, is timeless and eternal. The truth of the Western Great ever since the days of Socrates is inseparably linked to the body of the age and, therefore, in the first instance, perishable; in this case its eternal character expresses itself by the fact that it continues to act in time. Now the immortality of no other Occidental has shown so extremely Western a character as that of Socrates. Already in the soul of his disciple Plato he only survived as an image; he did not live on in the shape of a teaching or a doctrine, but he procreated

new doctrines. Thus things have continued down to the present day. Since he was essentially representative of a determinate epoch and the perfection of his type of wisdom was impossible in his time, he could not become an exemplar in the sense of Buddha and Confucius. He was the sage of the Occident in the form of a sketch.

Let us continue to trace in large outlines the development since the days of Socrates down to the present, keeping in view not the insights of favored individuals as such, but their importance for the general state of mankind. The unique synthesis of Plato does not allow of any kind of classification, its tradition deviating from the proper line of Hellenic development in that sense that the Platonist, like the Pythagorean before him, felt himself more and more to be one who knows, not one who does not know; for this reason the Platonic community to an ever increasing degree lived less for the sake of personal understanding than for the cultivation of an accepted faith, a circumstance excluding them from the compass of our present considerations. But philosophy proper more and more decidedly took the scientific direction pointed out by Socrates. The limitations of a possible science being, however, even greater at that time than they are today, scientific philosophy did not achieve results sufficient to satisfy the inmost striving of the spirit, and the same reaction which today is taking place against the purely intellectual set in on a very low level. A considerable part of the Greek philosophers developed into mere men of practical life, not only in the hedonistic, but even in the business sense of the word. There were times when the cloak of the philosopher typically covered the *causeur*, the parasite, the profiteer. From the Socratic attitude of the one who

does not know, this generation drew the sophistical conclusion that everything is equally correct, equally capable of being proved or refuted, that there is no truth, that everything was permitted provided it made for happiness. The stoic ataraxia, too, has one of its psychological roots in this attitude. Socrates' seriousness of research seemed historically dead, his way of profound responsibility deserted by the majority. Whoever was not an agnostic or a sceptic, whoever did not play upon words without positing Sense-problems, as probably did most of the professors at Athens, surrendered in the way of the Platonists already described to some recognized system, in which he believed as any Catholic does in the doctrine of his Church. Most of the later philosophical schools, as far as they were in earnest, must indeed be considered as churches much more than as abodes of understanding; thus the Christian pastor ultimately undertook an office which the philosopher had held before him—though in another way—and the external frame of which he had created. At a very late period, towards the end of Antiquity, Ancient Wisdom once more leapt up to flaming light; the brightest of these evening stars was Plotinus. From the point of view of eternity, he was perhaps the greatest of all Greek sages, for he has to a high degree completed for his own person what Socrates longed for. It is not true that the Neo-platonism of Plotinus means an Orientalization of Greek philosophy. The very opposite is true: original Platonism has become a finally Occidental thing only, thanks to him; were it not so, Neo-platonism could never have become the true Logos of Christianity, giving the Occident the specific character it bears today. Plotinus really was a perfect sage; he was not a mysta-



gogue, not a father of the Church, nor merely a dialectician or a moralist; he was the very embodiment of what today forms our ideal of the sage. For this reason the real hour of Neo-platonism has yet to come.<sup>1</sup> But for this very reason it has not been able in its own time to fulfill the historic task it had assigned to itself. Even Plotinus and his school were unable to reach the goal rightly shown by Socrates—to reconstruct life from the basis of the Mind. If Socrates lived full 2,500 years too early, the same is true of the great Alexandrian by not even a thousand years less. Reconstruction was finally effected by something different—by a new religion.

IN FACT, everything that survived of Antiquity flowed together into the one channel of Christianity. The Christian Church actually means the true successor and heir of antique philosophy, however foreign its spirit may appear as compared to the latter. For cultures continue in exactly the same way as organisms: every full-grown body must die, for as such it cannot develop beyond a certain stage; only its germ-plasma is potentially immortal. But of this there grows in each case a completely new form representing an independent and unique monad, not deducible as such from its parents. Here we find the metaphysical justification of death. "Meaning" only realizes itself on earth by expressing itself; this expression consists first in a primary creation and then in a perpetual reanimation of what seems a repetition when considered from the out-

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<sup>1</sup> The first book really competently dealing with Plotinus and his teaching is R. W. Inges' *The Philosophy of Plotinus*. London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1918.

side. But this animation continues only as long as the Significance in question has not yet exhausted its possibilities in the specific form. As soon as this is the case, Significance, too, has reached its goal, the letter congeals to dead nature, and henceforth everything proceeds according to mechanical laws. As soon as a final decision has been come to, freedom of choice no longer exists. Thus dead nature is the inevitable fate of all realized Spirit.

Hellenism as such had reached its natural end. However much Plotinus tried to animate it with new impulses—precisely through the medium of Greek wisdom they could no longer act, because it had found its final form and was therefore incapable of further change in response to new influences. Every definite spiritual direction, too, is limited inwardly, it is not unlimited; therefore it is impossible to continue it even theoretically beyond a certain point. The Greek forms of Life and Art and Thought are being *repeated* even today, but already in the days of the Romans there was no longer any life in them; that which gave them a soul had already found its final expression before that time and this expression precluded any further development. By independent thinking everyone may verify this truth for himself. Only the timeless, the incomplete and the unexpressed part of the Hellenic culture-body *could* survive. And that is precisely what happened. What was timeless in the Hellenic spirit represents today the pillar of strength within the culture of humanity; what remained incomplete is continuing to develop in progressing science and newly emerging wisdom; but the character of its immediate posterity was naturally determined by what had not been expressed—I say “naturally,” be-

cause the same law is revealed in all physical heredity. The alogical part of man's soul had been repressed during the rule of Greek wisdom; the purely human, in the sense of what is common to all, had remained unappreciated and unemphasized; this last circumstance came to a climax of general brutality and violence in the time of the Romans; when physical degeneration increased the psychic momentum, the positive attitude of Antiquity towards life deteriorated into wild sensuality. Accordingly, what had *not* been expressed during those centuries had of necessity to determine the character of the next culture-generation. The Christian Church became the body of the alogical, the democratic, of all that was averse to violence and to the senses—things which among others exist within all souls and which had now banked up an unheard-of vital power through the repression lasting for centuries. Henceforth these qualities which appeared as something alien became the representatives of the family tradition, and the family likeness—in this connexion the dependence of the new on the Greek and Roman spirit—which in the case of Christianity appears all the more striking the deeper one penetrates into its history, henceforth no longer appeared in external form and conscious thought or belief, but subconsciously as an unacknowledged premise. Or else, to keep to the physical simile, henceforth it expressed itself in an invisible manner, in the quality of the blood, in the way the nervous system was interconnected.

And again: it was not only thus as a matter of fact—it could not be otherwise. Antique culture having exhausted itself, it *could* only be succeeded by one of a type similar to Christian culture; this is the reason why

its inner adjustment to life ultimately triumphed over all powers, in spite of the latter being much the stronger for many centuries; for this reason Christianity triumphed precisely over Neo-platonism. It may be that Neo-platonism represents—at least in a rudimentary way—the optimum of what might have resulted from the union of Western clarity and Eastern depth. But for that very reason it could not become dominant *in that epoch*; qualities compensating those which had been developed by Antiquity had first to be inbuilt into the spiritual heredity.

Doubtless, the Christian culture of the early days and of the Middle Ages meant a tremendous retrogression as compared with antique culture on absolutely all planes, excepting that of pure inwardness. But precisely this retrogression was necessary for a reason which is of decisive importance in this connexion, namely, that in the antique world, in spite of its extraordinary giftedness, the intellect was very slightly developed in the objective sense. Within the body of the Greek Spirit, as we have seen before, it aimed at too much on the one hand, and on the other it reached its own limits too soon. Being inexperienced, it undertook the task of comprehending everything by itself—nothing was to be incomprehensible to the Logos; thus it had prematurely to declare itself bankrupt, and the unintellectual psychic forces took over the entire bankrupt estate. In true Bolshevik fashion, these forces declared the greater part of the liabilities null and void and then built up by themselves a new cultural organism. By degrees the old and fallen powers united themselves to them, as today the Russian intellectuals are attaching themselves to the communistic organism. *But the stress of impor-*

*tance was shifted once and for all.* Philosophy was considered as the handmaid of religion, science conceived no higher aims for itself than to comment on the Bible. This state of things continued down to the eighteenth century. Only when the alogical had exhausted itself in its turn, could a new epoch of determinant Mind set in. I cannot here expatiate on the organic necessity of all cultural fate. But the fact that such a necessity exists should be evident from these short remarks.<sup>1</sup>

YOU are aware of the fact—I am not the only one who has given utterance to the idea and proved it—that our historical state resembles that of late Antiquity in some most important respect. Only, we are confronted by the problems of Socrates and of Plotinus at the same time and, moreover, in a situation analogous to early Christianity and the Wandering of the Nations. The old religious and psychic forces are disintegrated, new ones of a different kind are developing and on the road to victory. The most advanced culture bears Alexandrian traits; the iconoclastic spirits of young Russia and young Germany are animated by barbaric strength. The confidence in science is shaken, the alogical primordial forces re-emerge. All over the world the old life-forms are being melted down. In the midst of what is thus fading away there emerges, similar to Julian Apostata in his own time, the French nation among the peoples, and the poet Stefan George in Germany among individual spirits. At the same time, the originally Socratic tendency, today especially guided by the star of Goethe, preponderates ever more strongly

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<sup>1</sup> I have developed this trend of thought at full length in the second and third chapters of *The World in the Making*.



and more consciously in all progressive spirits who have kept their balance.

What at first sight seems extraordinary, namely, the simultaneous rebirth of problems finally spreading over a space of time of a thousand years, which we are witnessing today, means one more example of that continual growth of the stratum of reality most easily grasped in its qualification as Memory, the necessary result of this growth being that originally successive things become increasingly simultaneous. But besides the analogies between our own state and that of late Antiquity, there are naturally insurmountable differences, one of which is so decisive that it sets its mark upon our whole age: *what then was fate is no longer fate today. In those days, knowledge really failed; today it need not do so.* In those days there really was a fated universal death of the old, and the new was affected from without in the sense of Spengler; today all barbaric nations have so large a share in the old culture, that the total substitution of the one for the other should be unnecessary. In those days the alogical had to triumph over the logical for a time for psychological reasons; today, immediately following upon the triumph over one-sidedness, a richer and more perfect state of balance than there ever was might be created between the various strata of the spiritual and psychic qualities in man. The return to the primitive we are experiencing need be no more than a short and moreover a localized state of transition. Today the very same thing which antique wisdom vainly aspired to is possible and even historically due: *a reformation and reconstruction of Life from the basis of the understanding mind. Today, humanity has reached the point at which it can solve the problem which Prome-*

*theus-Socrates was the first to posit*—and it was the tragedy of antique wisdom that it was unable to solve it. It is only in the present age that its solution has become possible: thus slowly does history progress.

CAN essential progress be realized from the basis of Mind?—All fulfilments in the course of our history prove it to be so. The fundamental insights of the first chapter of this cycle shall today find their historical proof and at the same time a more exact definition. All spiritual development means elucidation and enlightenment, and its aim is complete clarity. Now clarity is also the real goal in the connexion of essential progress. Whatever is obscure represents a preliminary stage; in so far the traditional theory of history, even in the pointed form Hegel gave it, is correct. Clarity is superior to obscurity in the same way as the articulate is superior to the inarticulate, as the finished painting is more than the sketch, because the ways of progressive development all take the same direction and because the road from Meaning to its perfect expression consists in the explication of what was in the beginning implicit. In all times of transition with their corresponding sultry atmosphere, there have arisen mentally obscure eccentrics, miracle-mongers, mystagogues and magicians who sought to renew the world through secret knowledge or extravagant emotions, and who warned against elucidation and explanation as against something profane. But such as these never yet had any decisive effect; never has history connected true progress with them; as viewed within the universal scheme of life, they might have remained unborn. In India, Buddha represents the greatest historical power within the spiritual and psychic

sphere; as compared with him no Yogi or Siddha counts at all; yes, Buddha, that man of merciless clarity, who was positive and scientifically exact almost in the modern sense, who was hostile to all obscurity and sultry atmospheres and whose ultimate goal it was to awaken from all dreams. Whatever has since happened in the spiritual life of India relates back to him, no matter whether it was congenial or hostile to him; for it is the influence of Buddha, and no other, which regenerated Brahmanism, just as two thousand years later Luther, that other great positivist averse to all emotional extravagance, by the reaction he called forth renewed Catholicism which would certainly have degenerated without him. It was not Empedocles, but Socrates who became the father of Western philosophy; it was not the Eastern mystery-cult, but Jesus, that unsophisticated and practical child of the world, who gave to history a new and decisive impulse. The humanists have meant more than Paracelsus, Kant has meant more than Hamann and Swedenborg, and beside the shining quality as of a lighthouse throwing its rays afar, which is the essence of Goethe, all mystics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries will soon be forgotten.

History can only be rightly judged from a superior point of vantage; only *great* effects are of any real account. For this reason the eccentric is hardly worth noticing. No secret association, no sects, no theosophical circles as such change the world; at best, they prepare the way for the great impulses, or else they canalize them. Experience shows that history recognizes only those as historical innovators who were not in any respect below the level of their age, who did not in any respect represent a retrogression, but who, on the con-

trary, from the highest plane of Being reached hitherto, showed the way to yet higher planes. One should not be misled by the fact that some of the greatest were personally hostile to the world and to culture: this hostility was always a particular expression of a highest standpoint of world-ascendancy; a truth which is best intelligible to modern minds in the shape of the example set by Tolstoi, although he was not one of the very greatest. Wherever true progress, which can be historically proved, is in question, it is always a case of something intellectually comprehensible; for elucidation, fulfilment, perfection are understandable as such. Not only the new impulses proceeding from the great sages, but even the impulses given by the genius of emotion—as far as they initiated progressive movements—can be rightly and justly appraised only from the point of view of the values belonging to the plane of understanding they incarnated; on the other hand, they can thus be fully appreciated. Christ could mean to mankind what He has meant only because a profounder *understanding* of the total Life-connexion was embodied in His teachings. The emotional value of His love as such would have had no effect. Emotion as such is transferable only in the form of infection, and from the purely technical point of view infection is possible only between contemporaries and near neighbours. What made Christian Love a regenerating influence, was not its specific character as such, but the profounder understanding expressed by it. It is very probable that Jesus Himself did not feel very much of what the emotional natures among His great successors ascribed to Him; He was essentially a man of will, hard, and a despiser of mankind; the latter is true of almost all the great bene-

factors of humanity; and it must indeed be so, because he only can help others who understands them and whose assistance proceeds from a knowledge of true Being, not from illusions. Christ's "love" was in truth a new general adjustment to life from the basis of profounder understanding, which animated the emotional body *among other things*, and which in an essentially emotional epoch, like the one that dawned after the fall of Antiquity quite naturally created chiefly new emotions. For emotions, too, have a rational side; the most modern psychology even considers them as belonging to the rational part of the psychic organism; thus feminine feeling doubtless represents something almost as logical as masculine thinking; emotions are alogical only, where they appear blind and unreasonable even as viewed from their own standpoint.

Thus Christ, in contradistinction to the many emotionalists those centuries produced, primarily meant an impulse of clarity. That He Himself understood it to be so is made clear by the one fact that He called Himself the Light of the World. The symbol of Light associated with all founders of a new faith without a single exception, suffices to show what constitutes the real significance of religious genii, too. In so far only as an impulse proceeds from spirit in its mental aspect can it effect a change; once, however, such an impulse has set in, no period of historical retrogression, however long, can really check its effects because in this case a ferment is at work the reaction of which is irreversible, once it has begun. In the context of a consideration on the Meaning of the World War I wrote at the time: "In what respect was Christ's appearance or the outbreak of the French Revolution productive of good?



Surely not, in the beginning, in the sense of fact, nor for a long time after. One is even justified in doubting whether up to the present day the progress on the plane of the facts, which the two events brought about can be considered as important. But they have changed the minds of men and their consciousness of things; and this is all-important, for only a changed consciousness of things can ultimately change the things themselves. Unfortunately, it is only too true that the mind shapes matter only very slowly; but then nothing else changes it at all. Laws began to reflect justice only the day humanity became aware of what justice *means*. Institutions as such are nothing; the most perfect institutions imaginable in themselves mean no more than mere crusts, which the first outbreak of passion reduces to dust, unless they express a corresponding degree of spiritual understanding. Thus the perfect civilization of ancient Rome could not last, because it embodied too limited an understanding. As opposed to this, the germ of profound insight Christ implanted in barbaric souls has made these capable of unlimited progression. In the same sense, every subsequent higher level was reached, thanks to the fact that a ray of deeper insight illumined life. When men realized their religious autonomy, they reformed the Church; when they became conscious of their inherent civic rights, they improved their constitutions. Contrariwise, degeneration always set in when understanding did not keep up with the facts. Never as yet have spiritual understanding and its expression within the sphere of the phenomena been on the same level. At the beginning of our era, understanding was deep, but the level of external culture low; today the latter appears immeasurably superior to the

former. This is the explanation of the unparalleled horrors of this war."—Indeed, everything depends on understanding, though not on abstract, but on vital understanding, embodied in the whole of man. Every new clarity achieved brings about an inward decision positing the problem of Life in a new and a better way; for so and so much of what is right and true is self-evident henceforth, a fact raising the level of the accepted premises and opening up new vistas. Surely, not all impulses making for clarity have been understood as such; of the Christian impulse even the contrary is true up to now. But to the extent they were not understood, they were unable to effect their purpose. Hitherto Christ has had a beneficial influence for the most part *in spite* of the religion and the Church bearing his name; the great Christ-period can dawn only, when the impulse He embodies will have been fully understood.

This is, then, the place at which the ancient problem of the mutual relationship between Eros and Logos can be posited anew. I forego every kind of metaphysical theory: I do not know to what kind of transcendental Reality these two symbols ultimately refer and I refuse to answer unanswerable questions. Humanity would have progressed further than it has if all the great had always acted according to the same principle; if Plato and Plotinus and the great Hindoos in the East had not "explained" what could not be intellectually grasped with the means of expression then in existence. In this way they have adulterated their intuitions, or at least they have induced their faithful successors to mistake questionable theories for metaphysical insight. It is true that a clear conceptual expression is necessary under all circumstances, if anything is to be completely under-

stood; but this expression can only be found as a spontaneous effect of the realization of the inner meaning of the thing; and precisely this meaning is missed when it is reflected upon before it had time to inbuild itself organically into the body of what has already been understood. The first thing to do is to become absorbed—in the sense of religious meditation—in the Significance of what is meant; for a right relationship to Significance can be established intuitively, independently of all concepts; this absorption, in its turn, leads towards the formation of correct concepts, just as absorption also leads the painter to an adequate representation of nature, or just as the eye once developed in correlation to the effect of light. For concepts really are organs.

I will not, therefore, dwell upon the question of what the symbols of Eros and Logos may ultimately mean; I will only state what is certain. Here, then, there is this much to say: there can be no doubt that there exists an original power or a primal principle, on which all creation inwardly depends, which is irrational and which finds the expression most familiar and most comprehensible to us in Love, the essence of which is the positive attitude without consideration of worth or merit; this quality, which the Greeks called Eros, represents in one direction the extreme limit of possible world-understanding. And it is equally certain that all happenings have their cause, from the point of view of thought, in a spiritual principle which can never, indeed, become creative without Eros, but which is primary as compared with the latter, because it is this principle which shows Eros the goal. Its essence, as far as we can grasp it, is Significance. I can say nothing certain, let it be remembered, as to the ultimate relationship

between Logos and Eros; nor do I know what these symbols ultimately mean. The fact that the Divine has been alternately understood as Eros and as Logos according to temperament leads one to assume that they are both equally deeply rooted in the essence of things and that they ultimately belong to a higher unity; it may even be a case of ultimate metaphysical identity. But what is of real importance *for us* is something different, and this has the advantage of being certain: the Logos, and the Logos only, represents the principle of initiative and transferableness on the spiritual plane. Every love is something new, and yet it is ever the same; there can be no progress on this plane. The emotional natures among the saints have not advanced mankind by their emotions as such; every bhakta as such represents a monad without windows. No "stimulation of sentiment" (*Anmutung*), as the Catholic Church calls the artificial awakening of emotions, is capable of reviving the actual love of a St. Francis of Assisi, for this love was something single and unique. For this reason, that "deeper love" as an emotion said to have been poured forth over the world by Christianity has never existed at all. Whatever was and is transferable in that love is its Significance, its expression and the way it develops—that is to say, *its Logos-side*. Even the process of "stimulation" as such, to which we have referred above, is not emotional, but intellectual. Hence what is progressive and what continues to act, even where it is a question of something essentially alogical, always originates from the Logos. The Logos alone is likewise the bearer of the principle of freedom. Eros means absolute bondage, subjection, fate; Logos makes possible a voluntary change. One should not here be misled by

the idea of Divine Grace: to the extent there is a question of fated events, we are, of course, not free;<sup>1</sup> once love has gained power over us, we are its slaves. But we may expose ourselves to its influence or we may not; we may nourish it, we may create it or let it die. We can make up our minds to change our state of Being and can educate ourselves and others to assume a corresponding attitude. Thus we are able to direct the powers of Eros.

It is impossible, I repeat, to solve theoretically and with final accuracy the problem of the relationship between Logos and Eros, because it is ultimately a question of super-rational symbols; super-rational in the sense that they refer to a "Beyond" of the distinctions between the rational and the irrational side of Life. The practical solution, however, consists in the fact that only through Logos do we take a conscious share in the creative evolution of the cosmos; for us as free beings the Logos means the pivot on which the world turns. In the cosmic Eros the unconscious only takes a share, and however powerful this may be, it does not reach the sphere of our consciousness of Self and Identity, nor can we make it the starting-point, of our consciously directed activities even where we are aware of it. As opposed to this, we can always make the Logos their starting-point. Wherever we have understood, we change from passive objects of Fate into its active agents, be it to ever so slight a degree; for, of course, the profoundest human consciousness does not reach down to the foundations of the world.

And now we may say this: the Logos, or simply

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<sup>1</sup> Compare the detailed exposition of what Freedom really means in *The Recovery of Truth*.



Understanding, is the real creative force. It is true that in every case creation originates from Eros, but then the Logos sets it in motion and that is what matters practically for us. At this point we have to tackle once more, and this time for the sake of attaining its ultimate solution, the problem of transferableness, a quality belonging only to the Logos-side of Life. Everybody must experience love for himself; what others may feel is nothing to me. But whatever a person has *recognized* can at once be understood by everybody else, provided the Meaning was realized in its expression. Now this last sentence leads us to the comprehension of a side of the latter problem to which we found no approach before, because another side of it had all our attention. It is true that, in every case, everybody must himself put the Meaning into the expression, because there is no other way of Sense-realization than that from within to the outside. But if an existing expression is completely adequate, it produces as a reflection the corresponding Sense-creation in everyone who is at all capable of understanding and masters the language used. Thus in the case of objectively certain and new insights as well as in that of new formulations, it is, after all, a question of something more than mere husks empty in themselves: they really are organs by means of which everybody involuntarily becomes aware of the object corresponding to them. Light, too, does not exist for man independently of his eyes, yet all those whose eyes are built alike see one and the same thing when turning their eyes in the same direction. For this reason, a perfectly adequate expression is necessary for every Sense-understanding; it is only the rightly organized eye which perceives genuine light. Therefore, new objective insights, new and improved

formulations, have a value in themselves, independently of their being understood, even though they have no intrinsic Significance; for they *create* in the many the inner reality, which was first invented by one only.

For that reason, their value is perdurable. What has once been written down belongs to the inventory of the earth as long as such things as writing exist and can be understood. If it is continually read, its influence, too, is lasting, as proved by the Bible, the Koran and the other sacred books of mankind. And if it is really and fundamentally understood, it belongs henceforth to the organism of the human soul, and thus from being an object of understanding it becomes an organ of understanding; that is to say, the premise of all further understanding. The fact is that every new insight creates a *new* momentum of libido, as the psycho-analysts call it—*i.e.*, the forces of Eros are endowed with a new meaning and find new possibilities of activity. Spiritual energy, hitherto bound by rigid forms, seeks and finds a new way, and this awakens all the vital spirits of the time. Hence the fecundating influence which may lie in a single new idea, even in a single new formula. One should call to mind the number of good books resulting from the impulse given by Sigmund Freud; books which are partly even better than those which the founder of psycho-analysis wrote himself: they all owe their existence to the circumstance that Freud opened up new trains of thought. In this connexion one should also remember the fact that whole generations of thinkers and inventors at once follow out as creators the track which a single great individual first discovered and of the possibility of which no one had any idea before. It may be that unconsciously or subconsciously everybody knows every-

thing: *conscious* knowledge can only result from an adequate expression; and if, on the other hand, the latter exists, then all those mental energies pour forth through it which before could only be banked up. The Logos represents what is profoundest *in us*, because by means of the Logos we ourselves are capable of directing the creative forces of the Universe. God may well be Love above all things; doubtless realization by emotion is a more powerful experience for the most than mental understanding. *The latter, however, means more.* It can get hold of and set in motion the Eros, and in so far it can create. One may explain the power of the Creator of the Universe as Eros—its *meaning* is Logos in any case. And what would Creation be without a meaning?

Judged from the point of view of consciousness, the Logos is really what is profoundest in man. The Logos incarnates the principle of freedom. If there were only Eros, there would be no other alternative for human beings but subjection to fate. Thus the conquest over that rationalism, to which inadequate understanding only too easily leads, lies *in* the Logos, and not outside of it. Nothing can be explained on the basis of the alogical—the alogical is simply there; it is true that not everything that is real belongs to the Logos-side of Life. But by means of the “ratio” the sphere of the irrational can be determined and defined, so that what belongs to the Logos is left to the Logos, and to Eros is left what belongs to Eros. It may be that the Logos itself is quite a small thing as compared to Eros. But it is also the decision of a second which calls together armies of millions of soldiers; a new equation, a bit of ink on a fly-leaf, have more than once altered the face of the world. God’s omnipotence, if it exists, ultimately rests

upon a similar trifle; on such a trifle, at any rate, depends our own bit of freedom. This bit, moreover, means all of what we feel to be our true humanity, and this has already become the sovereign master of nature. . . .

ALL progress is the result of increasing clarity and profounder understanding. Therefore, ruin or retrogression always took place, where understanding failed. To consider clarity as sterilization because only the obscure is thought to be productive, implies a complete misunderstanding of the true situation. It is true that intellect in the current sense of the word is never creative; it is also true that what has been completely expressed, by that very fact loses its creative power within man. But this is true of *every* level of Being, and the only way from an inferior to a higher level leads through the attainment of greater clarity. This is the all-important point. Although certain experiences may become impossible owing to a complete elucidation attained—this is true of all which have their basis in symbols now dissolved—they are replaced by a possible higher equivalent; the starting-point of creativeness is shifted onto a higher plane. Whoever does not wish or is not able to progress has, of course, every reason to fear clarity; but such a one, be it an individual, a people or a culture, is no longer of historical account. The Greeks finally became uncreative, not because they were too clear, but because the fate of finiteness inherent in every form made it impossible for them to continue to create from the basis of the clarity they had reached. The perfect routine of the organic processes, which take place automatically, means exactly the same thing on its own plane as perfect clarity on the plane of Spirit. Thus,

from the point of view of progress everything really depends on understanding.

But now we must strike another note of the melody: the same degree of understanding is not possible in all ages. On the plane of spiritual Significance the same law of organization is in force as on the plane of bodies: originally the function creates the organ, but without it it does not work. Understanding is possible only by means of what has already been understood. Where the body of concepts is imperfectly developed, Significance is as little able to make its power felt as the master of the phenomena, as physical life in an undeveloped or deformed body. Significance may be divined by imagination or intuition without an adequate organization—all times are equally rich in profound intuitions, or at least they might be—but they remain powerless and untransferable as vital forces as long as they have not created for themselves adequate bodies fit to live in this world. This is precisely where Antique Wisdom failed. In accordance with the law of historic counterpoint, the crystal clearness of Hellenic philosophy turned into Asiatic superstition because its aspirations had been too high. Reason was to have been capable of everything.—But has not Kant for ever precluded this error and its fated consequences? He defined the limits of the intellect and thus he assigned its right place within the general scheme to both the rational and the irrational. Therefore, since Kant, the fate which wrecked Antiquity no longer threatens us. Once we know our limits, we are masters of the situation and we need not under any circumstance relapse into the original state; as a general culture we can no more, from the clarity we have reached, tumble head foremost into the darkness of the



Alogon. It is true that Kant only found the fundamental way of positing the problem. His saying, I had to define the limits of knowledge in order to make room for faith, which he considered as the absolutely irrational, shows in which direction he did not proceed far enough: the Logos penetrates *all* spheres without a single exception. Should exact science and pure reason really have to remain for ever where Kant commanded them to stop, the principle of the Logos reaches beyond them. Behind every religion—to take only that one example—there is its meaning, which can be grasped as such and developed further. But Kant could not possibly recognize more than he has actually recognized. The organs of understanding alive within him have led to whatever profound insights they were at all capable of leading to—of all spirits in history Kant has perhaps most completely realized all his possibilities. For to repeat: if within the sphere of Eros according to its essence no progress is possible, the Logos acts more or less deeply upon life, the more it has become flesh. To return to our usual way of expression: an increasingly deeper meaning, potentially increasing *ad infinitum*, can inbuild itself into the phenomena; only this presupposes increasingly richer means of expression. In the same way as all Significances are inwardly interrelated, as every particular Significance, which has once been grasped, in its turn becomes an organ of comprehension or the symbol of a yet deeper meaning, their corresponding expressions, too, represent an organism. Where organs and functions are lacking, there is no possibility of manifestation; the more they develop and perfect themselves, the more Significance can manifest itself in the phenomena. This is the real importance of the indubitable progress of scien-

tific recognition which exists quite independently of the depth of understanding of the spirits making use of it: certain insights, most remote and unattainable goals of one age, become the general point of departure of a subsequent epoch because the objectified expression which has grown familiar enables even the superficial to start from the depth of its contents, just as the silliest boy knows how to strike a match, to invent which would have been beyond the power of Prometheus himself.

On the fact that a truth is independent of its being understood, provided it is expressed with objective comprehensibility, rests the possibility of any kind of objective progress. It is true that progress never takes place inevitably; if the representatives of a spiritual tradition are exterminated, or if this tradition breaks off somehow or other, a relapse into the state of nature automatically takes place. This has happened to the Egyptians, to the Arabs, to the Greeks; this may happen to every race. This state of things is as self-evident as the one analogous to this, namely, that the continuance of every physical type of organization is bound to the existence of its concrete representatives. But when the necessary premises are there, then a level of understanding which is *objectively* higher has been reached. It exists objectively, although it must at every moment actualize itself afresh in order to be realized within the sphere of the phenomena, because the existing expression of recognition and the existence of organs capable of comprehending it make its realization possible at any moment—a realization which actually takes place in a greater or lesser number of cases. The number of cases is of no account within spiritual connexions; this is true even on the political plane; thus to the shame of modernity it was

Rousseau himself, the arch-father of modern Democracy, who rightly distinguished between the *volonté générale* and the *volonté de tous*: the former might even be expressed by the few. The whole of man thinks with one head, breathes with two lungs, etc. Once the expression of a Meaning is put into the world and corresponds to the possibilities of understanding, then one is justified in saying that henceforth the comprehension of this Meaning represents a historical premise. But every age has its specific possibilities which cannot be overstept in a historically effective way. One may divine the timeless, one may be before one's time, yet a spirit is effective only "when its time has come."

Thus time appears of immense importance precisely from the point of view of timeless Significance. Now we understand why all saints and sages expressed the conviction that only when its hour has come can a thing be told to the majority; on the plane of spiritual history the metaphysical moment is as decisive for the possible effect of an action as the psychological moment is on that of politics or of love. The metaphysical moment is defined by the relationship of organs of comprehension, of objectified Significance and existing longing. The latter, in its turn, represents a function of the first-named factor. Our own age is so far ahead of the Greek period in the first two respects that from this very fact ensues the longing which implies the guaranty of fulfilment. I have already shown by tracing the trend of history up to the time of Kant, in what respect we have *objectively* developed beyond the fate of the Greeks. We are not threatened by the fate of a relapse into the Alogon which wrecked Antiquity, because Kant has for ever guarded humanity against the overrating and the

false valuation of intellect. Since then, recognition has in all respects continued to develop in the positive sense. Bergson has already carried the critique of the intellect so far that from the negative the positive emerges quite clearly; the essential vital reality which forms the basis of all phenomena. Husserl's Logic has fundamentally defined the way of Sense-realization which Hegel was the first to grasp intuitively but which he did not know how to reduce to the right concepts. Analogous merits fall to the share of the logicians, as far as they proceeded in the direction shown by Leibniz. Within the compass of the epistemological frame thus finally fixed natural science, however, has made such immense progress, that not only the Moira of external nature may be considered as ultimately vanquished—the same is true, in principle, of the Moira of man. This is due to analytical psychology, whose merits posterity will count among the greatest of all times. We know today that human nature can be comprehended and mastered according to the law of causality in exactly the same way as electricity, only, of course, in accordance with its own categories; the soul is not a mechanism nor is it a physical body. This gives a new meaning to asceticism and Yoga, and opens up new possibilities for their development.

If now we link up all these facts of progress, what do they imply? Through the existence of adequate organs of understanding a new level of Sense-perception has been *objectively reached, which makes possible in principle, a perfect mastery of life by means of the Logos principle*. This state of things need only become universally conscious in order to change completely the outlook of Western humanity. The Logos-principle

represents the only means of influencing cosmic fate we possess. Divine omniscience logically would imply omnipotence, for an adequately profound understanding would be capable of directing the course of every event. It is true that Lucifer's promise, *Eritis sicut Deus*, will never come true either with individuals or with humanity as a whole. However profound the depths the Spirit may ultimately reach, it will never attain to the direct mastery over the immeasurable powers of the cosmos. We are and always will be infinitesimal parts of the universe, we shall never reach the centre of the cosmic Sense-connexion, on which its complete mastery depends. Every Lucifer in every age will ultimately fall, for the simple reason that *finiteness* is inherent in human Being—and finiteness sets unsurpassable limits. Therefore the triumph over fate is possible only within the limits of what is essentially human. But a triumph beyond that is even undesirable and unimaginable for man. Whoever rightly understands himself and rightly adjusts himself within the connexion of the World, does not wish for sovereign rule beyond a certain point, because as a human being he cannot overlook a wider range. In so far Goethe's "reverence for the mystery" will remain the last word of mankind. Yet it can become an *understanding* reverence, and that is all-important. Understanding always is a creative act. By understanding, man conquers that which he reverences; by understanding, man takes an active share in what is above and beyond him. By understanding, he creates the new out of himself. If God created man, man in his turn must create God by understanding: thus only does God come to power on earth. Thus by profounder



understanding the world is related to a deeper system of co-ordinates, the centre of which rests in the inner Being of man.

I SAID that the metaphysical moment is defined by the relation between organs of understanding, objectified Significance and existing longing. It is the accession of the latter to the first two factors which makes possible the rebirth of the problem of Socrates precisely in our age. Only, today this problem can be solved. Today, mind is capable of reconstructing life out of itself. Today, the Logos is so deeply inbuilt in the phenomena that man can determine what formerly happened only by higher ordinance. We are aware of the limits of human reason, we understand the significance of our striving, we are the masters of nature. We can simultaneously overlook the inner and the outer world. Since we can scientifically determine what are our real intentions, we need no more become the prey of self-deceptions; we have become essentially independent of all Moira. From now on, this possibility must become the *conscious* motive of life. Hitherto it has not yet played that part. Yet this precisely is all-important for the centre of consciousness determines the starting-point of man. Wherever he shifts the emphasis within himself, there it actually rests; the whole Being of man is reorganized correspondingly. Beside theoretical instruction, beside practical education—that is to say, not beside, but over and above these two—therefore, an education to the synthesis of understanding and action is necessary for a life based on recognition. This is precisely the goal of the School of Wisdom.

As this School is inaugurated by this very cycle of lec-

tures and has not hitherto had any kind of experience whatsoever, I will say no more about what it is meant to achieve than I have already stated in the course of this cycle and the "Fundamental Problems" preceding it in this book. By their fruits ye shall know them. Only this much more, in order to connect the present general consideration more closely with our particular goal. Whoever has attentively followed our last trends of thought will have to admit what may still have seemed doubtful to him after reading *The New Union between Mind and Soul*, namely, that today essential progress can only originate from the Logos. But very many are prevented from being really convinced by the old prejudice that in the case of the Logos it is a question of reason and intellect in the usual sense, to which creative power is rightly denied; therefore in their opinion the School of Wisdom cannot possibly achieve what a new faith might; therefore vital impulses could not possibly originate there; it should, according to its very essence, produce an objectivity paralyzing all activity.

Now I must once more refute the current misunderstanding that clarity obtained renders one unproductive: it only does away with determinate problems in each case, but on the other hand it makes room for new and higher problems. Moreover, there can be no question of *replacing* Logos by Eros, for that is impossible; creative activity will always remain the task of Eros, that is, of Faith, of Love, of Energy, as the case may be. *Only creative activity can be given a deeper meaning by Logos*, and since under all circumstances it is Significance on which the effect of the former depends, that which the School of Wisdom aims at, precedes every work of faith and

love as a goal, both in principle and in fact; for only if animated by a profounder Logos can they bring forth better results than they have done hitherto. The most frequent objection against our aims may be considered as removed by these short remarks, which, by the way, only sum up what had already been said. But another objection which the most may mean when expressing the first, must be taken more seriously: in order that the Logos should be able to animate Eros, it must itself be creative, and yet it is said not to be creative. The answer to this is the following: Eros acts also on the plane of the Logos, so that there is not only dead, but also living, and therefore creative, understanding. We defined metaphysics as life in the form of knowledge; the sage is he who has completely become initiative of the Spirit: the fact is that within the sage that Eros has become active which Plato proclaimed as the highest, and therefore his understanding can create within the souls in the same sense as is usually possible only to Faith and Love. His knowledge does not sterilize, it fecundates. Therefore his objectivity means something fundamentally different from that of the cold intellectual; it does not deaden the subjectivity in question, it gives it a profounder background of meaning. Perhaps you will best understand me if at this point I tell you something personal. The plan to found the School of Wisdom originated from the effect of my *Travel Diary*: it had so vitalizing an influence on many that it led to their desire to make accessible to the public at large the vitalizing possibilities they thought embodied in my person; of course, it was first expressed by such as knew me personally. Now how is it possible that a book which is so

extravagantly objective as my *Travel Diary*, and which never and nowhere takes sides, should have a vitalizing influence? It is because the *Eros of understanding* is active within it, and therefore its essence does not lie in the juxtaposition of many world-views, but in the penetration of each one by profounder Meaning. The real Significance of the book has nothing to do with the journey round the world in itself; in principle, I might even have written it without leaving Rayküll, for part of it was written before and the most of it long after—its true meaning is this, that a man rooted in his inmost Self turns round his own axis, as it were, and thus can naturally speak the most various culture-languages out of equal depths. *The vitalization* of the particular in each case out of equal depths of Significance is therefore its essence. —Under these circumstances it can, of course, mean a vitalization for any particular existence which sees itself mirrored in the book. Under these circumstances, there is no incompatibility between the universal objectivity of this work and the practical task I have now set myself (not to mention my own personality, which is all too subjective and assertive in its idiosyncrasies): it is the same Logos expressing itself in every case. Unpretentious women are often those who most clearly grasp the essential. Thus after one of my lectures, which, by the way, did not deal with a religious subject, an orthodox Catholic lady said to me from an intuitive feeling for my personality: "You take nothing away from one, you only add to what one has." And another observed: "Your chief talent consists in making the superficial, which you accept as such, profound, and in remaining profound in the superficial." The Sense-perception I

teach means *creative* understanding, the *Lógos Spermatikós*, not the Logos of the modern intellectual. Thus, in the School of Wisdom, Eros will be no less active than in any religious community, only it will be an Eros of another kind; it is no profounder Eros in itself, it is only an Eros serving a profounder Logos. For the Logos, and only the Logos, is the one means of influencing Cosmic Destiny which we possess: therefore, to repeat, the aim of the School of Wisdom is more important than that of any other institution. Thus it will be able to vitalize the man of action—although in itself it does not aim at promoting action; it will deepen every religious personality—yet it has nothing to do with any particular faith and its effects. It will never take sides with opinions as such. The School, too, will have to be one-sided. That what many object to as its colourlessness or neutrality, is in reality a sticking to its colours. That profounder Significance, the comprehension and realization of which is all-important at this great crisis in history, lies *beyond* all specific configurations—a fact which does not imply that it evades them all, but on the contrary, that it is capable of vitalizing them all from within.

Hence it is clear in what respect the School of Wisdom can and will educate to a synthesis of understanding and action, to a life based upon recognition, by relating back all particular facts and states to profounder Sense-connexions and revitalizing them from the basis of the latter. This can, of course, only be effected concretely by taking each living case singly, because in each a new process of creation must be induced. Whoever even theoretically seeks its essence in abstract doctrine, misunderstands it completely, for without the platonic Eros its



Logos is powerless. The personal relationship between the teacher and the disciple will be all-important; every abstract truth will in each case be made concrete in the way it is necessary, in order that it should have a vital effect; for man only understands by means of what he has already understood.<sup>1</sup> For this reason everyone must be told the new in his own language, if it is to act creatively upon and within him. *That* teaching which the School of Wisdom represents actually lies beyond empirical formations. Therefore, he who teaches at the School will be justified in following and using old ideas and norms only, in so far as he creates them afresh in each case *ad hoc*, and out of personal understanding at that. This apparently unimportant circumstance means everything; it makes the fundamental difference between our way and that of all others. All the teachings of Antiquity, all practices, all rites even embody profound Meaning and rarely require alterations as such; they form part of the world-alphabet. But by the fact of their perpetual rebirth out of their meaning understood, they become the expression of another Sense-connexion; the old letter reveals a profounder Significance. In the same connexion the School of Wisdom rejects everything occult, all mystery as such, although it will have to stand for much of what hitherto has been considered as belonging to that sphere: even what, viewed technically, is mysterious can be used in the spirit of clarity. Mystery never appertains to the essence of a thing; it may occasionally belong to the way, but at every stage the ideal is complete clarity, because thus only do increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> I have expatiated upon this idea in the Introduction to the third edition of my *Immortality*.

profounder depths of creation become comprehensible to the mind.

Herewith we have returned to the basic idea of this chapter: that *clarity* is our goal. For this very reason the School of Wisdom is, in principle, open to all. For this very reason it belongs to the plane of the historical present. For this very reason it stands for precisely the task corresponding to what we called the metaphysical moment. The Ancients could undertake the same task—quite apart from the possibilities of solution—only in the smallest circles, because the recognized barriers separating masters and slaves, the Greek and the barbaric peoples, precluded the positing of mankind-problems. In order that the Spirit should really take possession of whole peoples, the artificial barriers had first to be pulled down. This was first done by Christianity, and it is now taking place at the second turning-point (beginning with the American and French Revolutions) by means of the World Revolution. Therefore the task of Wisdom—again quite apart from the solution—is far greater today than it could have been in Antiquity. Today Wisdom is not the goal of small circles, but of the whole of mankind. Therefore, once more, the symbol of our School is not the closed circle, but the open angle. May it now grow and thrive. If it develops in the right spirit, then it will doubtless, in spite of its external smallness and unimportance, become a germ-cell of reconstruction in the midst of the present process of universal disintegration. If in accordance with the result of the first chapter it sees its one object in the culture of Being; if in the sense of the second it aims consistently at forming the external from within; if in the sense of the present it seeks the greatest possible clarity, not putting up with

any obscureness, not suffering any kind of sultry atmosphere, making no compromise with the chaotic movements of the age—then, I am convinced of it, the School of Wisdom will reach its goal. It will prove true what St. John said:

*In the beginning there was the Logos.*

## SECOND CYCLE





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## *I. The Symbolism of History*

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THE way contemporaries judge history generally differs greatly from the way posterity looks at it. The latter invariably points out spiritual connexions to which the facts are thought to belong, a circumstance presupposing the reality of such connexions. As opposed to this, the contemporaries usually perceive nothing but meaningless facts, and if they happen to be active in politics, they are even convinced that only these are of any real account. The man of practice of small calibre and range is rarely refuted in this opinion. He lives from hand to mouth, and if he really does think further than is required by his immediate concern, he generally fares, not better, but worse, because his particular business does not necessitate a wider horizon nor a higher standpoint. Shortsightedness is no absolute disadvantage: the shortsighted eye is better fitted to fathom the near than the longsighted. In exceptional and great epochs, however, it becomes evident that the spiritual connexions which, as a rule, the historian only construes subsequently, are so deeply concatenated with the actual development, that it is impossible to understand and master the facts without understanding these connexions. The grandest instance of all times for this truth is offered by the epoch we who are living now have the privilege of witnessing. It is altogether impossible to understand on the basis of demonstrable facts as such the World War and the World

Revolution resulting from it. On the other hand, a surprising number of individuals and even nations have known beforehand, in spite of all fluctuations, what was going to happen. Germany *had* to be beaten—this was what most men felt. Why? The fact that half the world allied itself against Central Europe, that a campaign of lies (which is the normal thing at all times in such cases) was so singularly successful on this occasion, that, in particular, the absurd untruth of Germany's alone being responsible for the outbreak of the war was so universally believed, that it could become the basis of a Peace meant to be lasting—these facts explain nothing at all. How did these things come to pass?—They came to pass with fated necessity for the following reasons: that, on the one hand, in consequence of Germany's real state and owing to a long series of mistakes and blunders it had committed and, on the other, owing to misstatements and defamations most skilfully shaped and circulated by others, Germany had become for the overwhelming majority of men the *symbol* of what it would no longer put up with, both within itself and in others. The ideology of the Entente—formulated with surpassing psychological penetration—actually stood for the longing of the greater part of the masses, even in Germany itself: this was the reason why, in spite of the sacrifices demanded, so many nations let themselves be welded together in an alliance against Germany; this was the reason why half the globe was animated by feelings akin to those of the crusaders. Every nation in the last analysis was fighting for its *own* ideal; the defeat of Germany appeared to all to be the best way of realizing this ideal. Germany as a fact was hardly taken into consideration at all; its justifications were rejected a

*limine* for the same motives that the blindly believing Christian, whose one idea is his own salvation, rejects the results of Bible criticism; the majority, even in countries for which the ruin of Central Europe could not be of the slightest interest, simply believed, unless Germany falls, our ideal will remain unrealized. And the fact of this universal state of mind is not in the least changed by that other and equally undeniable fact that every one of the Entente governments and all the wire-pullers on the other side had in view the most material aims. Germany was the symbol of something in no way related to the actual facts.

But for the very reason that the war against Germany meant a symbolic action, the imponderable powers ultimately determining in history have been irresistibly withdrawing from the camp of the Entente since 1918—this time to the uncomprehending surprise of France; for since then it has become evident to a continually increasing number of individuals and nations that the Entente as a political combination had never taken its ideal seriously, that the facts did not coincide with the symbol, and that their idealism had been most cynically exploited by cunning business men. Owing to the excess of disappointment the imponderables first went over into the most radical, namely the Russian camp, for the oscillations of the pendulum are the greater, the stronger the shock given to it. The fact that Russia is in an appalling state, that in reality the Muscovite program offers even less of an ideal basis for national life than any other program ever proclaimed, did not prevent the ideal longing of humanity from finding its focus in Moscow, just as no facts had shaken the faith in the Entente before Versailles. Therefore, it is possible to fore-

tell with absolute certainty that Bolshevism will never be conquered by the Entente, and most certainly not by the anti-revolutionary opposition of the Whites.<sup>1</sup> From the fact of its being a symbolic representative Bolshevism draws so immense a force, that in the face of all facts it resists materially superior power and will continue to resist it, until for one of the many possible reasons Moscow will cease to be a symbolic representative and will pass on the torch to another, whose facts are more in accordance with the symbol, or until reason takes the place of passion on the European continent, or else until the latter is tired out and succumbs to inevitable temporary reaction.

This sketch offers a true picture of the profoundest and really decisive factors which have determined the fated issue of the World War. Thence ensue the particular facts, *not vice versa*. The ideal of the Entente *had* first to triumph, and subsequently that of Moscow. As I have shown elsewhere, Germany is very likely to represent the next symbol. The traditional Prussian spirit, including the so-called ideas of 1914, absolutely lacks all power of attraction because it is no longer rooted in the world-spirit. But the new Germany *may* come to possess such attraction to a very high degree. But however this may be, what has happened up to now should have made clear even to the most obtuse that history is a spiritual connexion and is therefore, like everything spiritual, to be understood out of itself only and not on the basis of the facts, which as such are always accidental.

History actually does represent a spiritual connexion,

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<sup>1</sup>I have left all these political prophecies and judgments exactly as I uttered them first on May 23, 1921.



as all great historians and philosophers of history have premised, and to that extent only can there be a question of history. The process of nature has no Meaning beyond its facts. But in history something spiritual strives for ever-increasing realization. This is the reason why on this plane everybody holds that there must or should be progress, why nobody seriously doubts that the events must have an underlying significance. Since history is a spiritual connexion, all facts necessarily are symbols at the same time; for as we have seen, the relationship between a fact and its spiritual meaning always and everywhere bears a symbolic character. What is significant in a historic phenomenon lies in the fact that its material reality embodies a Meaning, exactly as in the case of the Significance of a thought or that of a face—in the latter case it is obvious that the expression is everything. Hence history's essential fatedness. Fate is distinguished from a mere occurrence by the very fact that in the former one senses the workings of Significance.<sup>1</sup> Surely not of anything rational—for, on the contrary, almost every Fate is most irrational—but of a happening implying spiritual reasons and backgrounds which are none the less real for being difficult to pierce. Now the more important a historic phenomenon, the more it is a symbol, the more is it involuntarily judged purely as such. Even the official, the deputy represents something that is more than himself, only he does so in an external sense; there exists no necessary connexion between his person and that for which he stands. In every man of high position this connexion develops in the long run in a greater or less degree. This circum-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *Schicksalsproblem*, in *Philosophie als Kunst*.



stance is the real *raison d'être* of the hereditary principle in government: the representative man in the long run becomes *personally* greater than the unrepresentative. But in the great man personal and historical Significance actually coincide. In his case, every fact self-evidently has widest Sense-connexions as a background; whatever such a great man thinks, says or does, is *ipso facto* a symbol and is judged accordingly as a matter of course. In the case of the very greatest this even goes so far that only myths and legends are recorded of their lives and works. The reason is that the symbolical character of their lives was so obvious, that the facts of these so evidently did not represent last resorts, that even the contemporaries involuntarily witnessed myths and only myths were retained in their memories. For the myth, in contradistinction to the chronicle, is a primary expression of Significance.

ALL historical changes, as far as they are really historical, are essentially significant. Let us look more closely into this connexion. Wherever there is a will unto culture—that is to say, wherever the spiritual strives for expression through the biological, the human types in spite of all accidental circumstances correspond to the demands of their time, even where their gifts and talents are concerned; and the more clearly defined and vital the specific spirit of the former, the more do Meaning and expression coincide. Thus in all such cases it is not difficult for the historian to prove subsequently that, generally speaking, everything had to happen exactly as it actually did. Viewed superficially, this does not seem surprising, since every epoch is determined by the character of the men working in it, it should be obvious

that there must be a correspondence between times and men. However, the necessity goes beyond what can be exhaustively comprehended as a chain of causation in the usual sense of the term. In insignificant times, ruled by routine, one may perhaps wish that more interesting men would arise, one may picture to oneself what they would do and say—but they are wanting. In other ages a whole flora of such personalities which are vainly longed for at other times, blossoms forth simultaneously, and this flora then produces the effect of a strange unity of measure in spite of all differences, and it appears undeniably up to date. This mysterious state of things is most conspicuously a fact in the case of the Great Man: a great man invariably arises only when, from the theoretical point of view, his appearance seems possible; and if a great man fails to emerge, every profounder person feels that there are very good reasons for the fact. All great men of action, in particular, have felt this to be so, as far as they themselves were concerned. The man in the street often believes himself to be sovereign in his own right—every truly great man, whatever his personal theory may have been, has always felt that Destiny lifted him up and protected him; and it is significant that this has been all the more the case, the more the rise of a great man seemed a matter of chance or conditioned exclusively by his superior personality. This is true of Cæsar, of Wallenstein, of the great Mongolian conquerors; this is true to the highest degree of Napoleon. Although he was one of the most sovereign individualities and one of the purest representatives of Will in history, personally Napoleon thought himself entirely a child of Fate. Again and again he has expressed his conviction that, without the existing mass-movements and popular

moods, he could not have achieved anything; that had he not been born, another would have played his part. He surely knew what he meant. Now what is the meaning of this never lacking Fate-consciousness of the truly great?—Bismarck, also a man deeply conscious of the reality of Destiny, once said, "A man is exactly as great as the tide surging beneath him." These words, spoken by the Iron Chancellor at the height of his fame to my father, then a student of history inquiring at the foremost Source of the age into the essence of historical greatness, show the way to the true understanding of the whole state of affairs. That the historically great were true children of Fate does not mean that determinate talents are born only in determinate times, *but that determinate talents can only in determinate ages obtain corresponding Significance*. It is not for nothing that one or the other among the great men has often for years said to the friends pressing him onward: my time has not yet come. It is not for nothing that in cases where a man clings too long to his office the surrounding world is of the opinion: his time is past; it would be better if he withdrew; now he can only do harm, and thereby he may in the end bury his fame. So it is: only in determinate times can a determinate man, such as he is, stand for and therefore mean something great, for only at a particular time does his personality as it is give an adequate expression to the demands of the Spirit of the Age. Here, too, the important thing is the Sense-connexion underlying the facts, and not the facts themselves. The former can be only felt or anticipated. Only those among the highly talented, who act at the right moment, become historically great. Significance creates the facts, not *vice versa*. Nature as such

does not change throughout the æons; its law is that of repetition. And the races and peoples, too, hardly change with regard to their essential character as long as they exist. Therefore, it is probably true that among those peoples and classes which still are vital (not stagnating or degenerating) the standard of talents remains approximately constant throughout the centuries, just as it is always the same alphabet by means of which one writes down one's own thoughts however they may vary. But a talent becomes significant only when its peculiar quality and its tendency are in accordance with the trend of the age. Hence the varying stamp of character of the leaders from one epoch to the other. Today again, as during the decline of Antiquity, the Jews, in spite of their small numbers, are gaining an indisputable position of pre-eminence. And today the reasons are exactly the same as they were then: on the one hand, a whole age is liquidating, and therefore the Jewish character, which has a disintegrating influence on rigid and at the same time a uniting effect on fluid states, appears most in tune with the age, both in the negative and in the positive sense; on the other hand, a mutual penetration of the East and the West is taking place, a circumstance which, again, gives the Jewish character the start of others. From this consideration there follows among other things the absurdity of trying to destroy the predominance of the Jews by persecution: this amounts to about the same as a doctor's trying to cure measles with cold cream. Let the Nordic races rather try to bring about as soon as possible the dawn of a new constructive age, and let them at the same time, as soon as it is a question of leadership, make higher demands on their own intellectual and moral capacities; then the bad type of



Jews will of their own accord make their exit; this would be a particularly instructive instance for the way in which Evil is conquered by the Good.

Another significant instance: today again, as last during the Thirty Years' War, the type of the *condottiere* has a chance to attain significance—consequently he becomes historically visible; there have been such natures at all times, only they could not signify anything. A grand nature of this kind was unfortunately captured and executed by the Bolsheviks; otherwise he would very probably as a Tamerlane redivivus, whose horoscope was recognized by the lamas as being identical with his, have founded an Asiatic world-empire. This was the Baron Roman Ungern-Sternberg, described by Ossendowski in *Gods, Men and Beasts*, whom I well knew personally. He did not in any way fit into the pre-war age. His nature was suspended, as it were, in the void between Heaven and Hell; he was capable of the highest intuition and loving-kindness, as well as of the most appalling cruelty; he could in no way adjust himself to the norms of this planet in its then *bourgeois* state. But later on he worked miracles as a Siberian and Mongolian *condottiere*, and there he will probably live on through centuries in the songs of the nomads he led.

To conclude, one more illustrative example. In our days, blind fanatics and other representatives of the dark side of life, who are always in existence, once more find a chance of becoming important, a chance not offered to them since the days of the religious wars. In order to understand aright Lenin, Trotzky, Dzershinsky, Clémenceau, Poincaré (one should not wonder at this combination: *les extrêmes se touchent*), one must call to mind the essential kinship of Alba, Cromwell and Tor-



quemada in spite of all existing differences. Thus the predominance of particular natures in particular ages has its very good reason: in each age there are only determinate natures which can achieve historic significance. At this point we have returned to the problem of the great man. He, too, only appears at the moment he is historically possible, and this is not often the case. In order that not only supreme talent, but a great character, should be able to express the whole range and reach of his personality, a mighty wave, to keep to Bismarck's simile, must surge beneath the man. Such waves only rise in exceptional cases; at the moment I am writing (1921) they are unimaginable for years to come, because the ocean of history is being tossed about by so many simultaneous cyclones and typhoons, that a unified mass-movement will not soon result. And if the wave is lacking the man in his turn does not rise, for he develops in correlation with his destiny. In the case of a character, as seen by others, position plays so important a part in the sense of development as well as in that of influence and determination, that it is literally wrong to construe an equation supposed to be true on the field of experience, between a powerless and a powerful man: when he has come to power, a man may reveal qualities no one, not even he himself, would have thought him capable of.

Whether a great man necessarily arises at the right moment is another question. But one is almost inclined to give an affirmative answer because of the fact that great talents of all kinds are never and nowhere lacking, so that at least some one of them should, somehow or other, attain to a leading position, as soon as it gets a chance to act at all. The probability that the right man

should present himself at the right moment is, moreover, enhanced by the circumstance that every individual derives his culture and the particular direction his development takes from the *Zeitgeist* (it is the *Zeitgeist*, working creatively in secret, not official routine which forms the talented individual; the inferior man only is chiefly influenced by what is manifest). Then, those spirits and characters who are in accordance with an age are almost mechanically brought to the fore, while those not in harmony with it are left behind. The very same journalists, who could have no influence whatever in tsarist Russia and for years lived abroad as garrulous and quarrelsome pothouse politicians, found themselves what one may call professionally trained for their task when the revolution came. The cadets could never be of any importance in Russia and they will never be, however energetically the Western powers may support them, for Western liberalism bespeaks no possible kind of Russian reality. The fact that during and after the war Lloyd George could play first fiddle in England, and quite decently, too, a man, on whom as late as in 1914 all the leading Britons looked down, likewise has a deeply symbolic Significance: only this type of the mere tactician of small extraction and of a shortsighted, but extremely sharp eye corresponded for a while to the needs and possibilities of the new age which in England, too, has brought about the end of the old aristocracy and consequently of the capacity of farsighted planning.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In his illuminating work *Les lois de l'imitation* (fifth ed. Paris, 1907), Tarde has pointed out the necessary relationship of contrast between ages of tradition and ages of fashion, the latter being typically as shortsighted as the former are farsighted. "Quelque soit la forme de leur Gouvernement, les hommes d'état qui dirigent ces derniers temps, diffèrent à la fois des hommes d'état antérieurs par l'horizon très

Only an opportunist, who was anything rather than a statesman could hope to achieve political success of a kind in the extremely labile and precarious state of the British Empire of those days. Since the war personal initiative and tactical talent mean everything because the world has become fluid. This one fact explains the superiority of the Entente politicians over the Germans, whose art of dealing with men had not been trained by parliamentary experience.

But now let us give our attention to the problem as to why exceptionally great talents make their appearance in times of transition: this problem, too, can be easily solved from the basis of Significance. Leaders are always necessary. Now since among the men of routine none are ever equal to entirely new tasks, exceptional talents find their way to leadership more easily in such times than in others, in spite of all envy and hatred which are never lacking; a fact most impressively shown by Bolshevist Russia. As opposed to this, the circumstance that great talents are completely lacking at the head of

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élargi de leur surveillance sur un plus grand nombre d'intérêts similaires simultanément soumis à des lois identiques, et par le regard très raccourci de leur prévoyance. On a vu jadis le roi féodal de l'Isle de France, resserré dans un domaine étroit, viser dès le début la formation séculaire de ce beau royaume de France et travailler péniblement à la poursuite de cet idéal futur. On a vu le roitelet de la petite Prusse sacrifier dans ses calculs le présent à un avenir impérial très éloigné que ses petits-enfants ont vu luire. Jamais, de nos jours, n'importe en quel pays à commencer par l'Allemagne, une assemblée politique consentirait-elle à sacrifier un intérêt actuel en vue d'un bénéfice dont la seconde ou troisième génération après nous devrait seule profiter? Loin de là, c'est sur nos descendants que nous rejetons la carte à payer de nos emprunts et de nos folies" (p. 388). "Ce frappant contraste, cette sorte de compensation entre l'extension en surface ou en nombre et l'abréviation en durée," as Tarde defines the relationship, has found its most exaggerated expression imaginable in the policy of the World War and since.

new Germany is an unmistakable proof that so-called revolutionary Germany is actually most unrevolutionary. In this case, there simply is no wave to bear the great talent to the surface. For this reason all revolutionaries of importance who made their appearance in this country so fanatically devoted to order, were imported from Russia, if not in the material, then at least in the spiritual sense.

**B**UT the symbolism of history can be traced even further and more deeply in the maze of facts. The upper classes had completely failed in Russia; only among the most radical personalities of this immense country are great talents to be found. Similarly, as far as one can see, all talents are lacking within the reactionary circles in Germany (one should carefully discriminate between them and the conservatives). And the way the revolution and its aftermath have acted upon the royal families proves that the majority of them were actually fit to be dethroned. Now in China it was a matter of political principle that a dynasty was not only morally, but juridically at an end as soon as its capacities failed. This is a wonderfully profound idea, like most Chinese ideas relating to community life. For as soon as a historic formation has lost its vital significance, it is essentially dead; it is in the same state as a body which life has left. It is true that in spite of this it may continue for centuries, just as the Byzantine Empire, already grown rigid in the days of Mahomet, continued to exist up to the attack of the Turks because there is nothing in the course of nature as such which could induce a change: thus stars may for milliards of years revolve around the same centres. But once an impulse from



without is given, the whole thing goes to pieces in a moment. And this happens so very naturally and so strongly strikes the majority of men, whatever their personal point of view, as the solution of a crisis, that a short time after the catastrophe hardly anybody can believe that only lately the old order embodied so immense a power. This was true in our days of tsarist Russia. As soon as it was destroyed, it appeared to all contemporaries as something impossible; for this reason nobody knowing Russia to any extent believes in a restoration of the old order, whatever turn things may take there in the future.

The same is true, though in a far less degree, of the Germany of William II. It no longer possessed a background of Meaning—*i.e.*, its forms no longer *meant* anything to historic consciousness, however strong their appearance may have been. But why did they no longer mean anything? Because the corresponding hereditary qualities, world views, customs and the deeply rutted tracks of will no longer provided a possible body for the spiritual powers actually ruling the age. During the last hundred and fifty years, the caste-order which met with no objections in the Middle Ages has been fought, and today it seems to be at an end. All those who count feel this to be right. But why is it so? Because natural heredity does not perpetuate the qualities which are decisive for importance *nowadays*. What is necessary today is initiative, a wide range of vision, intelligence, versatility—henceforth without these qualities no character, however great, is fitted for leadership. But these qualities cannot be bred as far as experience allows us to judge. On the other hand, the qualities decisive in the days of chivalry, such as courage, strength of character,



normal political and tactic talent, can really be bred; therefore the caste-state was true to Sense in those days. Now on the spiritual plane Significance means the same as Life. As soon as a man feels his existence to be devoid of meaning, he ceases to strive. Historically this is expressed by the fact that those classes and types which are no longer urged from within by a vital impulse grow rigid; they become the equivalents of a dead language, of a dead ritual. In the long run they congeal to such an extent that even a talent of the highest quality no longer finds the way to initiative in this medium; or if it does, it finds it only by breaking through the fetters of tradition. Thus in truly revolutionary ages the most gifted individuals from out of the old culture-ranks instinctively took sides with those who stood for renewal. This was true of Lafayette, Mirabeau and Talleyrand; it was true to the highest degree of Bismarck, whose introduction of universal suffrage in his day meant something far more revolutionary than anything that has happened in Germany since 1918; this is true in present-day Russia of Lenin, Lunatscharsky, Tschitscherin, not to mention the great pacemakers of the revolution, all of which belonged to the aristocracy.

The history of the peoples and classes indeed offers the same spectacle as the history of art. In the long run a superannuated style no longer finds important representatives; that is to say, no talented man chooses it, and if he is born into it and does not subsequently break through it, he can never attain importance. The changes of the *Zeitgeist* evidently have an empiric basis, and we must now understand what this is. It can best be defined with the help of the instance we have just stopped at, namely, the development of art. For it is art precisely

which reveals the existence of a collective unconscious, of that mysterious thing postulated by analytical psychology and the existence of which we, too, have already been compelled to recognize. Gustav Pauli has shown<sup>1</sup> that the art-style always *anticipates* the course of development by several years: the earliest revelation of a new *Zeitgeist* is effected through the medium of the artist's soul. Therefore, the leading figures in the art of painting may be looked upon as representing barometers; the changes on the philosophical, religious and political planes inevitably, though more slowly, move in the track of the changes in the sphere of art. In the first instance this implies that the Sense-connexions newly setting in first reveal themselves to the most sensitive organisms within each generation—and these are precisely the artistic organisms. But it means furthermore—and this is what I am driving at in this place—that the change of the determining Sense-connexions finds its empiric expression in a corresponding change of souls. It is only by expression that Significance becomes a reality on the plane of experience; one can understand only from the basis of what one has already understood; one can only create something new from a given basis. Exactly in the same way, the concrete reality, to which in this case the above-mentioned abstract truths apply, is a *fundamentally identical state of soul within all human beings in an identical unit of time and space*. Nothing but differences may be visible in the superliminal consciousness; the subconscious of all is similar and is evidently connected; for if it were not so, there could be no unified *Zeitgeist*. Viewed from this point of vantage,

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<sup>1</sup> In *Die Kunst und die Revolution*. Berlin, Bruno Cassirer.

history embodies a continuous evolution of the unconscious in accordance with the changing Sense-connexions; and this evolution which, again and again, strikes as a surprise one generation after another is identical, viewed on the empiric plane, with the changes of the generations themselves; it is their material expression. And this evolution is not only continuous, but irresistible for the very reason that it is a case of unconscious development. Conscious development can be crossed; but it is impossible to cross unconscious development. And such crossing is entirely out of the question here, because it affects whole generations at a time which, generally without being conscious of the fact, influence each other by means of suggestion. This is the reason of the empirical impossibility, quite setting aside the epistemological, of a man being historically important when the direction of his will is not in accordance with the Significance of the Age; since every Meaning demands adequately developed organs of understanding in order to be comprehended, it must remain powerless if it does not stand in correlation to the collective unconscious.

Now it should be clear why it is possible to read the spirit of an age aright through pure understanding of symbols: the spiritual is the *soul* of the empirical, and since it represents the primal as opposed to the latter, one is far less likely to err if one directly considers Significance instead of the external expression which is in a continual state of change owing to the influence of external chance-occurrences. Whoever is able to visualize Significance as such can unerringly determine what may happen in the long run—and the impossible never occurs. At this point we will return to the concrete side of the question. The old German state not only pro-

duced no notable leaders—it *could* not produce any. Why not? Because, owing to the mind-killing and will-numbing routine ruling its machinery, all men of initiative entered economic life. Accordingly, the latter abounds in intelligent heads and strong characters. In Russia political radicalism for the present alone offers not only external, but even inner possibilities of expression to existing talents; for all pristine forms are dead. Hence the utter impossibility of the Russian emigrants, who have remained unchanged, ever regaining importance in their own country. In England an average type is keeping at the head of affairs, preventing a precipitate development of things by means of shrewd compromising—in accordance with the fact that the British Empire, which probably has been more changed by the World War than any other country (for today England itself is nothing more than an English-speaking community among others, in which younger ones will soon become determinant in importance), is in the fortunate position of being able to develop in a gradual and uninterrupted way. But what about France? Today France appears as the most reactionary of all countries, yet it does not lack talented men—quite the contrary. The reason is this: just now France represents an island of the past in the midst of a new world. She is the only country in Europe the roots of which reach down to Antiquity; hence she is so completely formed in the sense of the French word *figé* as to be incapable of further change. In order to become capable again of such she will require a considerable blood-rejuvenation, which may possibly have already taken place during the World War, but which can hardly become historically effective for at least twenty years. Thus, for the present France finds within

herself the impulse to extreme self-defence, as from 1914 to 1918 she found the courage of despair. In so far it is in the same psychological situation, only with the sign inverted, as it were, as a rising nation—it wishes to impose *its own* world on the world at large. Thus it pursues the ancient traditions of Rome, reincarnated in Napoleon, at the very moment when the spirit of these traditions is losing its possibilities of expression in European politics; thus it pursues quite logically a policy of pure violence, nor will it under any circumstance have anything to do with Europe's renewal. Thus it may retain its artificial position of pre-eminence for quite a time. But if some day the heights of the barometers of France and the rest of the world are equalized, she will irresistibly, though perhaps without being herself aware of the fact for a long time, sink back into comparative insignificance. For if it gives access at all to the new world-spirit, the body of France will prove unequal to the new tasks before it has undergone a great change.<sup>1</sup>

AS YOU see, history is really dependent upon and supported by spiritual connexions. Whoever grasps these can not only understand the happenings when they are still in a state of development, a thing which the historian succeeds in doing only with regard to the past: he can also rightly foresee most of the future events without in any way being a prophet. The young nations which gained their independence through the World War have succeeded in this to a very high degree—during that period hardly one among them staked its money on the wrong horse—because their members,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the development of this trend of thought in the chapter, "France," of *Europe*.



having been hitherto prevented from taking an active part in politics and restricted to observation and to taking advantage of every opportunity, bent on the future alone in expectant absorption, were in particularly close and conscious touch with the collective unconscious and the Significance of the age. Surely, nobody who is not a prophet can foresee facts as such, for their sequence is brought about by external causes, and, viewed from the plane of Significance, these causes generally are matters of accident. This is true in the extreme in democratic ages because the born inhabitants of the social lowlands, once they come into power, wish above all things to *feel* that they are now powerful; and in this they succeed best by allowing purely personal motives to have a voice in matters which are of the utmost importance for millions of men; the moods of kings and queens were nothing as compared with those of modern ministerial dayflies. However, the fundamental possibility of foresight is not impeded by this circumstance: accidental occurrences gain importance only when they bespeak a spiritual necessity. Therefore such accidents as are needed never fail to happen in the long run. The Russian revolution of 1917 actually broke out accidentally, because the supplies of grain for St. Petersburg came to a stop for a whole week, and for this reason the women poured out into the streets and the soldiers would not fire at them—but this accidental occurrence became important only because it set in motion what had long been due. It is possible to foresee with certainty so many particulars in the destiny of nations because the process of nature as such remains approximately the same throughout the ages, so that the right accidents are sure to occur when they are in accordance with Significance;

this law, which applies to individual destiny as well, although it is not always traceable in this case, unquestionably applies to the nations because here it is a matter of great lengths of time; in the course of the life of a nation it makes no difference whether a change demanded by Significance takes place fifty years sooner or later. Thus Bismarck already foresaw the inevitable ruin of his work when William II came to the throne. Thus as early as 1915 the most national circles in Russia, the descendants and continuers of the work of the old slavophiles—I am recording personal remembrances—never doubted that the World War would terminate with the ruin of the Romanoffs and the end of the Petrine era; the renewal would come from the East and not from the weakened so-called Heart of Russia. Thus outside of Germany nobody capable of judgment doubted long before the revolution that it represented a colossus with feet of clay, while the Bolshevik leaders, on their return to Russia in the spring of 1917, passed the parole as a matter of course, as it were, that it was not Germany which was now to be considered as the enemy of the liberation of the peoples—on the contrary, that in spite of its momentary imperialistic façade, it was predestined to be a socialist republic—but that France was the enemy. On the basis of the same understanding of Significance, since Versailles, farsighted men in all countries are certain of a new rise of Germany as opposed to the inevitable decline in world-importance of France. Catastrophes mean very little considering the longevity of national destinies, unless they actually cut off the development itself. In the long run, only the vitality available decides in each particular case upon the continuance. The im-

portance within the community of nations is decided upon by the relationship between the *Zeitgeist* and racial basic qualities, if vitalities and initiatives counterpoise each other; for an exhausted, degenerated or cowardly nation never has any future, however talented it be. Apart from these facts, routine plays a part hardly to be overrated. Inertia represents the strongest force among men as among the stars. Under all circumstances, the things a nation has been accustomed to think and to do for hundreds of years, the things the peoples have believed in for centuries—provided they have not become meaningless and are not, therefore, actually dead—have more importance for the future than any of the achievements of times of convulsion. In the long run, persecution and oppression are only beneficial for what is truly vital. Moreover, revolutions, provided they are energetic enough, seem to belong to the illnesses one has only once—illnesses which, once they are through, leave the organism strengthened in its normal state. Thus, today, France is the most conservative of all countries, more immune against the bacillus of the World Revolution than all the others. Accordingly, in the far future a particularly conservative Russia is to be expected—an expectation not coinciding, however, with the hopes of the emigrants that the pre-revolutionary conditions will be restored; after times of catastrophes, on the whole, only the newly established remains, and of the inherited conditions such only as have in the meantime been acquired anew in one way or another and have thus achieved a necessary relationship to the new Significance of the Age. A profound Meaning is at the bottom of all historical developments. Since man is capable of direct

Sense-perception, he is able not only to understand the past and the present, but also to foresee future events.

**B**UT now to conclude—what about that spiritual Significance which should form the creative basis of all historic phenomena? In principle there is no more need to answer that question; it has already been answered in the preceding chapters. We will now, therefore, at once proceed further on the basis of what we have understood before. Where it is a question of insights belonging to the Fourth Storey of Language, there is but one way to achieve progressive clarity: to prove the truth of the principle in an ever increasing number of particular cases. For this principle is something ultimate; it cannot be traced back to anything else, and therefore it cannot be more closely determined by means of definitions; it is essentially a perspective—and perspectives evince their existence only by what they enable us to see; in themselves they are unseizable.

Significance and Life actually are the same: on the basis of the insights gained in the third chapter of our introductory cycle we may now say this: Significance is the Logos-side of Life; accordingly, it is the ultimate terminus to which thinking and understanding can attain, no matter what it may be and mean beyond the border of its intelligibility. Therefore, it follows from considerations of pure principle that Significance must be the ultimate basis of all historic phenomena. We have already ascertained that the meaningful connexion of a physical organization means exactly the same as the articulation of a language or the rhythmic unity of Meaning in a poem. History is meaningful in exactly the same sense. All historic events bear the character

of fatedness because through what is biologically meaningful, something profounder strives for expression; and the latter is that which is ultimately determinant. In the context of this chapter I will say no more about the empiric intermediaries between the externally visible facts and their profoundest basis than I have already stated when referring to the existence of a collective unconscious, because this sphere is as yet little explored; moreover, observation and experiments alone can lead to a precise idea of these connexions, and like Newton I have no wish to establish fictitious hypotheses. As far as I can see, Jung's collective unconscious represents the ultimately traceable facts we know of at the present, which cannot as yet be further analyzed or more clearly defined. By means of this medium a particular spirit is revealed which may be called *Zeitgeist*, or Significance of the Age.<sup>1</sup> This spiritual entity is as real as the spiritual basis of individual life. But as its direct body of activity is not firmly organized like the individual and embraces an immense amount of single beings, it is not, as I have said before, a thing we can clearly grasp by means of our instruments of thought. It is vague and fluid and undergoes phantom-like metamorphoses within space and time. It can be actually comprehended only in the case of an experience of the congruency of personal and super-personal volition, as represented in the great man fulfilling the demands of the moment in the spirit of eternal Significance, or, to express it in terms more general and impersonal, in times in which the absolutely right thing is done. It is a well-known fact that this happens very rarely indeed.

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<sup>1</sup> I have given a closer definition of this mysterious entity in the first chapter of *America Set Free*.



But on the other hand, at this point the specific quality of Sense-reality becomes perfectly clear to us—it becomes clear not only conceptually, but also in the sense of actual perception. Spirit is realized only by means of personal initiative; to seek for a “Meaning of existence” one has not oneself put into it implies a misunderstanding; only through the realization of Heaven upon earth *does* Heaven become real—these truths long familiar to us gain living contours and colours when considered in the context of History. *In the course of History, that which is due happens only then, when it is personally willed.* If the adequate personalities are lacking, nothing can be achieved. It is true that what is necessary happens sooner or later in any case, because at one time or another it is certain to be willed and because precisely the banking-up of energy creates a strong momentum of libido; thus, the necessary reformation of Life is brought about by war and revolution, if insight does not introduce it gradually into life. But unless this is done in time, the expenses are so great that the realization can coincide with destruction; thus even compressed air can have the effects of high explosives. For this reason *understanding at the right moment* is the fundamental condition of historically beneficial effects. Only by means of the Logos are we co-determinant in Cosmic Destiny.

But here the all-important question is the depth of Sense-perception. Where it is a question of personal life, it is easy for everyone to survey the interrelation, or at least it might be easy. We had said that the manifestations of the Meaning of Life are continued automatically on the plane of Nature by means of heredity. But the essence of the human spirit does not exhaust

itself in the fact that its psychic and physical Sense-body is true to Significance: it feels something profounder to be the real meaning of its being. Now this does not realize itself spontaneously; man's free volition and activity alone represent its means of realization. Thus Jesus could open the gates of Heaven only to the thief on the cross who met Him halfway. Now this free co-operation is man's real mission on earth, however often he may fail in it. If really the mere preservation of his inheritance exhausted the meaning of man's life, it ought to be completely in accordance with Sense to live *in order* to eat, *in order* to amuse oneself, *in order* to grow rich and have a good career, as so many actually do. But such as these are never truly satisfied, and they are satisfied the less, the longer they live. *Everybody*, whether or not he confesses it to himself, really knows that his life apart from the meaning it has as such, has a yet deeper one, and he feels truly happy only in proportion to the degree to which he gives expression to the latter. Again, his satisfaction becomes deeper in proportion to the depth of Significance to which he relates his existence. Every human being is urged from within by the commandment: become what thou art; everybody is inwardly driven by a feeling of "should," no matter whether he opens his ear to it or not. The summing up of these single postulates results in the postulate of a progress of mankind; a postulate which is universal, no matter whether mankind actually does progress or not. And this makes finally clear the true Significance of History. Significance *should* be grasped ever more profoundly; human nature, which as such never changes at all or only slightly, *should* become the expression of an ever profounder Spirit, for

there can be a question of progress only in the inward direction, in the dimension of Sense-perception: this is the reason why in all Destiny we seek a meaning, why we are instinctively convinced in spite of all counter-proofs that we can and should learn from history.

Now within certain bounds, in certain respects man has actually progressed. By means of corresponding formations which continue to exist in a nature-like way in re-vitalizations representing mere repetitions, progressively profounder Significances have been objectively inbuilt into evolving life, so that today everybody can, according to the possibilities offered to him, *start* from a range of deeper Sense-perception than was within reach of the man of Antiquity. The Christian impulse has objectively changed the world in that, in spite of all personal imperfections, certain higher insights, feelings and kinds of decisions have become a matter of course; intellect has conquered the Moira of Nature; by means of self-created institutions it has furnished Life with better external ways, the meaning of which belongs to a higher range of understanding, which are destroyed only for short periods in exceptional times of revolution. Accordingly, today it is objectively possible to solve Socrates' problem to regenerate Life from the basis of understanding; it can indeed be regenerated from the basis of a profounder Creative Understanding than ever before influenced life. But here it is always a question of inner and external *possibilities* only, and in each case it is left to personal initiative to make use of this possibility; where personal initiative does not set in, barbarism continues in spite of all external civilization; and superficiality prevails in spite of the greatest possible amount of information.

It is, therefore, extremely difficult to trace the line of *actual* progress. The way of thinking which denies the fact of a progress of humanity doubtless appears more justified by experience than that of the Spencerians (which, it is true, are nearly extinct today). Nevertheless, there is as little doubt that a slow, a very slow essential progress does take place; it takes place in that sense, that progressively profounder spiritual forces are continuously being inbuilt into life. In the case of the individual, who seriously and steadfastly strives for perfection, it is easy to trace the progressive movement. In the case of history in which the collective Spirit of mankind is at work, it is extremely difficult for the one but decisive reason that here the means of expression in question are manifold. Here the inertia of nature comes into play to the highest degree; the finiteness of all hereditary lines, the blindness of the emotions and passions, cosmic accidents, tremendous mechanical consequences of infinitesimal causes can cross the course of development; a great man may die a premature death, a nation grow rigid all too soon. But even in these cases failure is not the essential thing; what matters is the understanding *that the decisive accident might have been deprived of its importance by means of profounder Sense-perception*, which in its turn would have made foresight and anticipation possible. Thus we can perhaps learn most from History where its course was unhappy: one learns what one might and should have avoided; and from the "How" of failure ensues indirectly the "How" of future improvement. The antique world need not have been so completely destroyed—it happened thus only because in those days there was not enough insight available to correct the

process of nature; the World War might have been prevented; Bolshevism need not have developed into a power threatening all culture; a peace might have been dictated at Versailles founding a better world, instead of utterly ruining the old. Yet even the triumph of nonsense is never without sense—I mean to say, without a profounder Significance than simply that those acting at the time have done badly: under given conditions of inferiority, the triumph of non-sense represents the only thing true to Sense. In most cases, there is a deeper meaning even in the *momentary* inferiority of the defeated. The fact that, apart from all possible accidents of distribution of power, the other comes into the position of leadership has, as a rule, the meaning—just as in the case of the triumph of the one or the other world-philosophy—that a determinate body provides the best means of expression to the Significance of the progressive striving of the time being; for decisions which are unjust in the vital, not in the moral sense, call out such strong reactions that their effects never last; if a caste or a nation perishes without this being a case of physical extermination, this almost always implies that it was no longer rooted in Significance. Thus in spite of all accidental happenings, it is the striving of what Schiller called “humanity in man” for ever more perfect expression, which in the first instance manifests itself in history; only this striving is expressed falteringly and interrupted by phases of slumber and aphasia. History always has a meaning; the world’s History is always at the same time the world’s judgment, and its events are always symbolical. To that extent Hegel was right when he taught that the World thinks itself out in man.



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## *II. Politics and Wisdom*

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AT THE conclusion of the preceding chapter we said that Hegel was right when teaching that the World "thinks itself out" in man. But from the basis of the whole of the observations made hitherto we also perceive to what extent he was wrong; he was wrong when assuming that there is such a thing as necessary progress. The world of History, being the world of conscious life, appertains entirely and exclusively to the realm of freedom. Therefore, nothing that lies beyond the mechanism of Karma need happen at any particular moment; therefore, every destiny can be marred. According to Goethe's idea the way of progress resembles a spiral line: no spirit is capable of arresting the course of nature, but it can continuously raise the latter on to a higher plane. This is effected by relating it back to other centres of Significance. If the sage is superior to Destiny it is due to the circumstance that, in his case, the Significance of the accidental occurrences he is exposed to, like every other man, is so entirely different from the meaning they have for themselves, that this very fact robs them of their power. In the same fundamental sense even the astrologers acknowledge man's freedom. It may be that the events both of the future and of the past are as pre-existent in time as the landscape which a traveller in a train views only in the form of a succession of pictures, for which reason,

if he knew nothing else, he might be justified in believing that the landscape itself was a chronological sequence; in the same sense it may be that the events of life do not really come into existence in the course of our lives, but that we actually travel into them, as it were. But according to the stage on the scale of Beings on which we live, other Sense-connexions are determinant from within; therefore no destiny is inevitable in the literal sense; the amount of freedom we possess, however infinitesimal it be, suffices to enable us to take such decisions, that no planet can completely rule our destiny. The fact is that the horoscope, too, does not apply to Significance; it only applies to the language in which it is expressed; no wonder, therefore, that the horoscope of many of the greatest was decidedly inauspicious; for precisely the difficulties they were subjected to called out their deepest spiritual powers, and these are not subject to stellar forces.

Our outward subjection to Destiny is fundamentally the same and actually less than our subjection to natural disposition, to hereditary position and to the general physical process, none of which impair anybody's consciousness of freedom. But all decisions improving on the course of destiny must be taken by ourselves; no creative impulse but that proceeding from personal initiative can change the course of nature. And the necessary decisions have hitherto most rarely been taken; as yet inertia is the supreme law ruling mankind, too. In his book on History considered as a process of giving a meaning to what is otherwise meaningless, a book I recommend all believers in automatic progress to read, Theodor Lessing (Leipzig, Emmanuel Reinicke) has

shown that hitherto non-sense has almost invariably triumphed; subsequent interpretations pointing to progress achieved, which were mostly offered to public opinion by the successful men or nations of the moment, almost always meant falsifications. All the more does it become our task to grasp true Significance and to set all our energies on its realization. We have no right any longer to be spiritual beings in vain. Considering our present state of consciousness, blindness is a downright sin, and it is only just that misunderstanding should be as cruelly punished as though it were a case of the worst of crimes. History does not recognize the norms of middle-class morality; the man who does not understand, however moral his outlook may be otherwise, must never again be allowed to lead. To this extent the fated issue of the World War, profoundly understood, is of a grand justice unheard of since Biblical days. But in principle it is no longer inevitable that non-sense should triumph. Even those forces which are completely blind in appearance, those forces which create irresistible mass-movements, have a profound psycho-spiritual background; even these, viewed from the standpoint of Significance, are never completely wrong in their activities. Instead of getting indignant at them, or submitting to them in a cowardly manner, one should try to grasp the depth of their significance and thus to master the blind forces. Nor is it impossible to do so. Therefore, at this point a consideration on politics and wisdom must necessarily succeed a consideration on the symbolism of History. Since no progress takes place automatically, since only initiative on the basis of Sense-understanding can induce it, what is necessary now is

to define in principle the general way of possible Sense-realization, as applied to our particular subject.

LET us take a short mental survey of the spiritual foundations of the events of History as they revealed themselves in the facts we dealt with in the preceding chapter, and let us try to arrive at a clearer determination of their meaning. Here we are struck by the fact that the spiritual principle which always underlies the material, in the first instance represents, or at least need represent, nothing profounder than what one calls public opinion. The fact that in the beginning of the World War the Entente had an immense power of attraction which later passed on to Moscow, has in the first instance no profounder significance than that public opinion adjusted itself to their respective ideologies. Now it is obvious of how little intrinsic value public opinion can be. Taken literally, it was mostly sheer delusion or even madness which set in motion the most tremendous movements. Today, the idea of converting or destroying non-believers by the sword being a duty seems to us a monstrous superstition—and yet it was the acceptance of this superstition which called into activity that wonderful idealism which reached its zenith in the Crusades. Hatred of the Germans represented the most powerful impulse in the World War, and it is not unlikely to determine the course of history for a considerable time to come—and yet it means the worst delusion that ever disgraced the world. Therefore, the man who rightly evaluates the spiritual imponderables can be considered superior to the other, who takes into account only the outwardly visible facts, such as material power and whatever can be proved as effi-

cacious by means of calculations, in the first instance as a *Realpolitiker* only. Indeed, it cannot be asserted that during the World War the policy of the Allies was more "spiritual" than that of the Germans: they were only more realistic in their way of thinking, in so far as their actions were more in accordance with a wider sphere of reality on the basis of a more correct evaluation of the balance of power. If there existed no Beyond of public opinion—I again use the word as a generic designation for everything belonging to the same connexion—then only *Realpolitik* in the usual sense of the word would have any meaning, and ideals would have no deeper significance than that of being instruments in the hands of shrewd tacticians. This is the way most statesmen always have in their heart of hearts thought of ideals, whatever they may have overtly professed; nor do I know of any opportunist of any profounder insight who was ever refuted by experience. The superficial opportunists usually are, but not so the profounder ones, because they take into account the ideals, too, as forces among others; and because thus, if necessary, they actually come to realize even ideals for opportunistic reasons. This was the way of England's great successes in history. The fact is that *Realpolitiker* always use *existing* means for *attainable* ends. As opposed to this, the typical failure of all ideological policy can be exhaustively explained by the one consideration, that it works with *non-existent* means, even where its goal is not a chimera. It is typical that it proceeds from an inadequate idea of the connexion of forces and, moreover, that it believes in a power of abstract ideas which, being mere abstractions, they do not possess. Our pacifists fail to recognize European rapaciousness,



our socialists that the realization of their goal presupposes a very much higher moral state than the one prevailing at present; the promoters of a unified Europe, that for the present there are but few Europeans, the existence of which is the necessary premise for Europe's unification. The ideologist as a type is invariably mistaken about the forces actually in existence. This is why the ideologist has been defeated by pure opportunists throughout the course of history; defeated precisely in the sense that the latter achieved something *better*, something closer to the ideal.

Still, this statement does not close the subject. Indeed, a short retrospective glance at our preceding investigations suffices to show that our present considerations have not as yet reached below the surface. The Collective Unconscious, the characteristic quality of which represents the foundation of the *Zeitgeist*, is something profounder than public opinion, which is mostly an artificial product, the roots of which do not stretch down below the surface. The *Significance* of an Age is the soul of the *Zeitgeist* and as such is a creative spiritual force. For this very reason, the ideals, too, must be essential realities; their meaning cannot possibly exhaust itself in the mere fact of their being instruments in the hands of shrewd tacticians. Nor is it true that the ideologists, who invariably fail as practical politicians, are of no importance whatever for this reason: it is only in the *realization* of their ideal that they inevitably fail. I need not give reasons for the fact that the consciously unpolitical idealists, who sacrifice themselves for their idea, be it as pacemakers or as simple soldiers, do not only represent the most noble, but also the most important, factors in history from the

practical point of view: the witnesses of a truth, and particularly the martyrs who shed their blood for it, are the first to make it widely known and to give it power of attraction. But a consideration on statesmanship has nothing to do with these true idealists; no idealist as such ever was bent principally upon practical success—a thing which must be the first concern of any statesman; the idealist desires above all to sacrifice himself.

Now what concerns us here is the fact that even the ideological politicians, that is to say the intermediaries between the confessors and the practicians, are not devoid of political importance. Thus, there can be no doubt that Rousseau, Proudhon and Marx, notwithstanding the fact that their utopianism has been conclusively demonstrated, have ultimately played a more important *rôle* in history than all *Realpolitiker* since their days; for it was from them that there radiated a great part of those actual forces which represented the last resort of the latter. Thus all the diplomatic ability of the leaders of the Entente and the Bolsheviks would not have led to the ensuing great events, had not tremendous forces been inherent in the ideals with which they operated. Therefore, the representatives of great ideals cannot simply be contemptuously disposed of as ideologists, merely because they undoubtedly were very bad politicians.—The key to the solution of the problem lies in the fact, proved by experience, that no deep faith can possibly be disappointed. The truly loving woman believes in the man, the disciples believe in their saint, the savage tribe has faith in its magic ideas or images in the face of all facts disproving or refuting their belief; as a rule, this belief is even strengthened by attacks,

opposition and refutations. In the first instance this seems mysterious. But it can be exhaustively explained by the consideration that a truly ideal faith proceeds from a deeper layer of Being than the acknowledgment of things demonstrable; and that its object only represents its exponent in the empirical field. It has a direct reference to Significance—a fact women usually express by maintaining that whatever evil things are proved with regard to their beloved they do not really belong to nor touch his true Self; the believers in gods led *ad absurdum* usually express the same idea by asserting that one fails to understand the former's true intentions.<sup>1</sup> For this reason counter-evidence is the very thing which must strengthen his faith, because the faithful believer feels with joyful surprise that any counter-evidence does not apply to what he really means.

Now all ideals have their ideal location in this profounder layer of Significance within man's essential being. In so far as vital forces emanate from them, they are under all circumstances—and quite apart from the question of their theoretical truth—the exponents of the profoundest spiritual reality in man, a reality which lives in a realm *beyond* that of the phenomena. For this reason they are actually irrefutable. This is the only reason why they are capable of creating heroism and willing self-sacrifice. The latter impulses must under all circumstances originate from a super-empiric urge, for, viewed only within the connexion of the empiric, even the highest appear absurd. Thus, the great progressive ideas set into the world by utopists and at any

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lévy-Brühl's most suggestive essay, *Les fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures*. Paris, 1910.

moment refutable on experimental grounds have their roots in the profoundest spiritual depths of man's being. This is the wellspring from which, again and again, the faith in these ideas is nourished. This is the reason why failure only serves their purposes. This is the reason why in the case of the world-stirring ideologies which have their guiding stars in the former, however contestable and incapable of survival their literal setting may be, it is really a question of something profounder than what is called public opinion: *on the contrary, the latter's clinging to some particular ideal represents an imperfect means of expression of the real striving of the age.* Thus, Christianity conquered the Occident, fighting its way through innumerable contradictory ideologies and dogmata. The Homousians and Homoiusians, the Athanasians and Arians, Catholics and Protestants did not fight one another so bitterly because the literal beliefs the opposing parties clung to were different, but *because both meant the same truth* and neither could understand that identity of meaning does not exclude the possibility of a difference in the way of its expression; it is only the consciousness of truth which fires and keeps alive the courage to fight. Only the will to realize a high ideal made possible the miracle of the Crusades; the true impulse which inspired the World War as it had before inspired the French Revolution was a profound spiritual striving for progress. This can even be said: however great the number of wars, the immediate origins of which were realistic considerations of cunning tacticians—great things have only been achieved when the peoples were inspired by an ideal; and by an ideal which was not a chimera, but which bespoke the true Being

of the nation; for depth realized alone sets in motion the really powerful and vital forces. Thus the true reason why Germany did not hold out to the end of the World War lies in the fact that no profound, no true ideal—as opposed to a merely invented, illusory ideal such as the so-called ideals of 1914—other than that of defending the country inspired the nation; for lust of conquest pure and simple may possibly inflame Tartars, it can never inspire Germans.

Thus in the case of that spiritual essence which underlies the visible historic phenomena and finds its exponents in the recognized ideals, it is not a question of mere psychic imponderables, such as the *Realpolitiker* consider them to be, but of the profoundest motive power of history which the concrete outlook of the moment does but reflect in a qualified form. That this is really so is made quite clear by the fact that the focuses of what the masses are longing for can change (Entente-Moscow-Germany); a fact we dealt with in the preceding chapter. In reality it is the *same* ideal to which mankind confesses, now in this embodiment, and now in another. Viewed from this point of vantage, the practical mistake made by all ideologists becomes finally clear: it is the same in principle, however strange this may sound, that the superficial realists make. The ideologist, too, does not believe in the spiritual in itself, in the eternally vital, in that Reality which is immortal yet mutable and ever creative—he believes in some determinate embodiment of the spiritual; only in his case it is not a concrete, but an abstract embodiment. And since the latter is more rigid and unvital than any possible concrete embodiment, and since it finds no support



in any given form of life, the ideologists prove even more superficial, as politicians, than do the opportunists. They end by considering only their program, their doctrine, the correspondence of action to theory; and consequently they completely overlook all profounder forces, the presupposed connexion of which they appraise according to their prejudices. The paradoxical outcome of this is that there is not a pin to choose between ideologists and superficial realists. It is as superficial to acknowledge only the abstract ideas as such as it is to consider pure matter as the decisive and real force. Ideological policy invariably leads itself *ad absurdum* in the shortest possible time; superficially opportunistic policy does so as surely, only a little more slowly. Opportunism necessarily results in inconsistency; and in any case, at one time or another, the critical point is reached when this inconsistency becomes evident to the ruling majority and proves more than the latter is willing to stand.

These considerations implicitly answer the question as to which statesman is really capable of working lasting effects: it is the statesman who does not become the prey of ideologies without, on the other hand, considering *Realpolitik* as the last resort. It is he who sees through the interplay of the forces and opinions of the moment and who, from the basis of the spiritual depths clearly perceived, is the first to anticipate the possible permanent result. The ideologist sees nothing but the abstract goal and has no idea of the way leading to its realization; the opportunist, on the other hand, adapts himself only to existing forces. *The true statesman is the man who changes the phenomena from the basis of*

*the idea.* For him the primal origin, the way and the goal represent *one* single vital connexion.

HERE WITH we have reached the centre of the problem of the relationship between politics and wisdom. Nothing is explained by the mere statement that the opinions of peoples and classes but rarely stand the test of criticism. For instance: whoever infers that the idea underlying socialism is futile because its program is impracticable, is most shortsighted: if millions are filled with enthusiasm for an idea in spite of all counter-evidence, its ultimate meaning, though it is mostly not understood, must be rooted in the depths of spiritual Being; whatever is wrong or false about it is the fault of its embodiment. This should be clear to anybody who remembers the effect the ideas of the great utopists had upon him in the most receptive stage of his youth. Youth is always idealistic and mostly radical, because in this period the profoundest is directly determinant in the form of a vague idea, whereas the knowledge of the laws of reality is deficient and the psychic body regulating the relationship to reality is yet unformed. This is why all intuitions of genius originate in youth. But that profoundest Significance is as yet unperceived and not understood; it is a pure instinctive urge striving for expression. Now the adolescent cannot find the expression really in harmony with his own inner Being, because he has as yet no idea of the direction he should take or wishes to take; at the same time he feels the absolute necessity of expression because Significance is at work within him and becomes real only by being expressed; therefore he begins by confessing to something which is offered to him from without,

firmly believing that this is what he actually means. Anybody can at any moment find outside himself something which is *apparently* in harmony with his own Being, for the very simple reason that he puts his own meaning into what is foreign to him and accepts the thoughts of another merely as a means of expression for the meaning he himself only vaguely apprehends, without being able as yet to give it a personal expression. At one time or another in the course of his development and the differentiation of his spiritual organism, the adolescent becomes conscious of the fact that the accepted expression does not coincide with his own personal meaning. Then he discards the expression; he takes over new ones, discards these in their turn, till he finally finds one exactly corresponding to his own inner state, or else he creates a personal expression for himself. In this sense and no other was Nietzsche a Schopenhauerian at one time of his life and a Wagnerian at another. Superficial critics imagine that his having stood for different ideas at different stages of his life means his having continuously changed his opinions. However true this may be of superficial persons, it is never true of great or what one calls real men; on the contrary, the latter developed by means of all sorts of transformations, opinions into insight (*Ansicht-Einsicht*); they developed the discrepancy between Meaning and Expression to the highest congruency they could personally attain. The greater a man's inner possibility of progress—*i.e.*, of deepening—the greater the difficulty of finding an expression he can recognize as final; for every Significance understood relates back to deeper ones, which in their turn at first become conscious only as dim and vague ideas, and so on and so forth, since Life is perpetual movement.

But whatever depth is really comprehended is seized by means of the *adequate* expression. The objectified expression represents the only possible basis of further progress, because it is this expression, not the vague notion of a better one, which creates a new starting-point from which consciousness can proceed further. This is why young writers must not only write down whatever is their best at the moment, but must if possible have it printed, although they feel that they will probably disavow their first attempt very soon; for thus only do they create for themselves the steps leading to a higher form of perfection. This is why Luther actually advised violent natures to "sin bravely"; this is why Hindoo Wisdom teaches that every Karma must be worked out, and psycho-analysis that repressed representations means the greatest check of all on the road to progress. This is why courage and truthfulness ultimately are the most important virtues. Only by means of the expression does a given Significance become the starting-point for the perception and realization of yet profounder ones. But on the other hand, only because there is such a thing as a realization of Significance by means of the expression, is there a demonstrable progress in understanding. The Sages of Old were already conscious of the profoundest Truth; only they expressed themselves by means of imperfect theory. We are not today beyond Plato in that we have progressed beyond him in the question of Sense-perception, but in the sense that we are able to give a better expression to the same insights. Where progress is concerned it is not a question of a change from false ideas to right ideas, but of a growing congruency between Meaning and Expression. This congruency is absolutely necessary, because the

background of the world is so spiritual a thing that the slightest mistake in the Expression results in the manifestation of non-sense; whereas on the other hand every correct formulation makes new Sense-connexions empirically effective which had no possibility of coming into evidence before. The adolescent may divine what is profoundest: the mature man, sometimes even the old man, alone can clothe it in the right words. This is why all tangible progress originates from mature men.

Now this is true not only on the plane of pure Spirit, but likewise on that of politics. Profound spirits have always known what should be the character of the human community—*i.e.*, what the deepest will of the individuals and the peoples aims at. Therefore, the fundamental commandments of the mythical rulers of old are eternally valid. But the realization of Significance on the phenomenal plane presupposes the choice and mastery of the right means of expression; and that is so tremendously more difficult where these means are represented by concrete men than in the case of thoughts, that it is not to be wondered at that since the dawn of history mankind has made so little progress. For what are the means of expression of political Significance—the means corresponding to what correct and accurate ideas, concepts and ways of thinking are in the case of theoretical Significance? They are the impulses, passions, desires, opinions, views and customs of men. *These must become true to Sense, in order that political Significance should become capable of realization.* But since, to the despair of the idealists, human nature does not change in the least, man's primal impulses stand in the way of progress with ever renewed force. That is to say, these primal impulses in their turn grow stronger



in proportion to man's progress on other planes, by reason of the law of compensation which on the plane of the fluid and ever-moving and changing soul-life corresponds exactly to the law of correlation within the physical organism. One-sided development does not disrupt the organic unity, for the one reason only, that it is automatically compensated by a corresponding retrogradation of other parts of the organism. Thus present-day humanity appears more primordially barbaric than any other has done for a long time past, *for the very reason* that it is the most intellectualized humanity that hitherto existed: as a compensation to the differentiation of intellectual life, the rest has re-grown primitive. But even apart from this, the Demons grow in correlation to the Genii of Light. The organism being a unity within which the highest and the lowest are interdependent and support one another, every kind of growth means an advantage for the whole. Its quality may become more sublime—the Plutonic qualities remain Plutonic for all that and they, too, are enhanced and vitalized by the process of purification. This is why St. Francis of Assisi taught his disciples to consider growing temptations as evidences of Divine Grace. This is also the reason why the Christian myth very correctly represents the end of the world not as a peaceful transition to higher spheres, but as a mortal struggle between Christ and the Antichrist. The primitive inhibitions lose their power in the course of development all the less as the progress of humanity is becoming ever more dependent upon the character of the masses, and not upon that of highly endowed individuals; therefore blindness, inertia and ignorance do not diminish in importance; they must needs increase as the world grows more

and more democratic. There can be no question of things growing automatically and necessarily better on earth. On the contrary, there is every reason to fear that false ideas, outlooks and theories, that the stupid see-saw movement of action and reaction will remain the normal thing for many thousand years to come.

The majority is for the most part only dimly (if in any way) conscious of what it really wants. It is true that the majority, too, again and again adjusts itself to noble spirits which make clear its own volition—for this is their mission in life—but then it misunderstands them, the misunderstandings multiply, they develop and generate new ones, and the formations which mean the end of their vital process are ultimately considered as the very essence of Significance. This is the origin of the Churches, confessions, political parties; this is the reason why since the days of Cain humanity oscillates inanely between radicalism and conservatism. After each rush of radicalism it becomes clear once again that things cannot go on that way, and then the realization of the very *same* thing—this is the salient point—is for a time attempted in the opposite way. Viewed from a higher vantage allowing of an insight into deeper layers of Significance, the sincere radicals and conservatives of the same age who are conscious of their responsibility ultimately never aim at something different, but at the very same thing. Only they cannot see this because they are capable only of a one-sided formulation of the problems. Remember the fact that the program of the German conservatives of the year 1921, by reason of the change of the general state of affairs, inevitably had a greater resemblance to the socialist program of 1913 than to that of their own party in that year; remember

the truth recognized all over the world, that the leading statesman should stand above the parties and should yet keep positive ends in view which are rooted in the will of the nation—and what I have stated will no longer sound paradoxical.—After the aforesaid, is it to be wondered at that the oldest books of statutes, such as those written by Manu, Moses and Solon, might be invented even today because their contents are so little lived up to, as a matter of course, even now? It is not difficult to bring about a congruency of Meaning and Expression on the plane of ideas. But on the plane of Life—such a task makes such demands on all capacities, above all on patience, that it appears almost beyond the power of man.

AND yet the task can be solved. It can be solved precisely from the basis of profounder Sense-understanding, and this is the very thing the leaders of history up to the present day have almost always lacked. While surveying the wisdom of the East we found that Culture of Being can only originate from within, and that Evil can only be vanquished by our helping a stronger Good to grow independently of strife. We saw, moreover, that the profoundest forces, even though represented by those who are weak from a worldly point of view, triumph in the long run because they are beyond competition (*hors concours*) on their own plane. Every kind of deeper Sense-perception creates actual superiority over everything that lies nearer the surface. This is the general way in which spirit rules nature; thus, political progress, too, can only be achieved by means of a deepened Sense-perception. If one desires to direct Life, one must be superior to it in

the sense that one does not, like the opportunist, reckon only with facts, nor merely adapt oneself to existing forces, nor aim at purely external ends, but *that one anticipates Significance*. Whoever can do this from the vantage of a position granting effectiveness, transmutes dependence on destiny into determination of destiny; he directs forces which would otherwise direct him. For instance, whoever has understood the meaning of the socialistic idea, as the idea of a new form of the eternal ideal of solidarity which is in harmony with the spirit of the age, including both the economic and the juridical side of Life, is *ipso facto* beyond all parties and programs and can keep in view the goal inwardly and independently of the former. It means even more: he practically triumphs over their dialectics by creating an adequate new embodiment for the Significance he has more profoundly understood; an embodiment which for that very reason is not subject to the limitations of the old one. In this sense Bismarck has fulfilled the aspirations of 1848. The German unity could not be created in the way it was attempted then, because all real forces opposed it. Bismarck, later on, made these very forces subservient to the same idea and thus gave it the only embodiment possible in his age. The fact that personally Bismarck was hostile to the ideas of 1848, has nothing to do with the thing itself. In the same sense the peaceful unification of Europe will ultimately be the result not of a vote of idealists, but of the association of economic interests for far-reaching egotistic purposes. Precisely the "Meaning," the representation of which the ideologist would like to monopolize, unconsciously underlies the activities of the Bismarcks and that of the great economic leaders of today. Within these it is

vitally active, whereas, as represented by ideologists it is confined to abstract theorems and is all the more unable to act, the louder it is proclaimed, for the very reason that it cannot act from a *superior* level, but represents merely one configuration among others opposed by superior powers. Whoever grasps Significance in itself, no matter whether consciously or by instinct, is *ipso facto* superior to all opinions and fixed forms and may work with any party or represent any kind of program; and obviously he alone can show the direction in which things must move, for he acts independently even of the destiny of the particular form he personally represents, influencing the far future. This is what made the greatness of Cæsar and Bismarck. Cæsar was, to all outward appearances, a pure opportunist—he began as an adherent of Catilina and at first made his way in a very modern, that is objectionable fashion through all the dangers of those times of ferment; having advanced to the position of the *arbiter res publicæ*, he did only what was possible at the moment step by step. But he always did so in such a way and in relationship to such a Sense-centre, that every small thing became the symbol and germ of the greatest. Thus, personally he founded no kingdom, but the Imperium proved to be so entirely the child of his Will, that the succeeding rulers called themselves Cæsars, and even today Cæsarism and Imperialism are the designations of a direction of Will immediately originating from the great Roman.

On the political plane, too, it is less a question of *what* one does—that depends on external circumstances—than in what spirit one does it; significance is ultimately decisive. Thus no great man of business enterprise ever thinks of money: this falls to his share as a matter of



course, provided he takes the right measures.—And now as to Bismarck. In Germany's history the Iron Chancellor will stand for something very much like what Cæsar stands for in Roman history. From a superficial point of view, he was a realist hostile to all ideals, bent on doing whatever was nearest at hand; as a personality he belonged in many respects to a dying period. But he did his work from out of such depths of Sense-perception, that the whole of Germany's future, whatever turn it may take as to details, will originate from and refer back to him. Germany can only be united in its original manifoldness, it can only be not-aggressive and of a socialist structure; its centre has to lie within the continent, not at sea; it has to be bent towards the East and not towards the West, whatever the aspect of things may be. It is thus that Bismarck first united it and set it on its feet. He did so by means of the forces then existent. Many of these are dead by this time. But by means of the forces of tomorrow Bismarck's spirit will remanifest itself as soon as Germany has recovered its poise.<sup>1</sup> More than that: his spirit is likely to become ultimately the *spiritus rector* of the whole of Europe, for the German federal state probably represents the exemplar of the future United States of Europe. Do you fully understand by now why the great statesman not only never is a mere *Realpolitiker* in the superficial sense, and above all why he never is an ideologist? The latter very often grasps Significance aright, but he embodies it within a rigid system or program, and then he strives to realize it from without. But in this he can never succeed, except by means of

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<sup>1</sup> The reader may note that by this time, 1928, these prophecies made in 1921 have already mostly come true.

terrorism, and then only for a short space of time and never with any possibility of a happy end, because whatever is rigid and works from without is in itself something external, one phenomenon among others on the plane of possible strife. Hence the tragedy of all unpolitical idealists: Kropotkin, who was perhaps the noblest soul of the nineteenth century, has become the spiritual father of Bolshevism, of that most horrible system of destruction of all ages; the name of Gustav Landauer, that high-minded apostle of humanity, will forever be associated with the history of the days of terror in Munich. Ideals must work from within, not from without; a change of the phenomena as such is of the least importance. In this connexion I know of no more instructive book than H. G. Wells' *New Macchia-velli*: it should be read by all those who, being socialists at heart, despair of its future in the face of the failure socialism has proved to be according to idealist standards. The hero of this novel begins by being an extreme radical, but in the course of his political career he gradually perceives that socialism means a general outlook, and not a possible program; and that every party-socialist is an eccentric. Thus, the hero of the novel joins the conservative party, precisely in order to realize his ideal, which had remained unchanged.

The fact is that Significance in itself always lies beyond the letter; no letter, *not even the one most resembling it externally*, can possibly claim the prerogative with respect to it. As Lao-tse says: "Significance embraces everything that exists, yet it does not merge itself into the existing things by reason of its activities." Exactly as the meaning of a religion lies on the far side of dogma, and that of a philosophy on the far side of

its system—and this *Significance* alone continues to live through all its transitory embodiments—exactly in the same way the Significance of ideal political volition is fundamentally independent of all embodiments. This is why the profound man does not wonder at the fact that during the World War the same idealism directed to the same goals burnt in all camps: this is why he perceives but *one* striving, manifesting itself through all the fluctuations of the age, no matter whether the Entente, Moscow or Germany comes to the fore, whether the momentary Significance of the Age favors radicalism or conservatism, whether destruction or reconstruction is at work on the surface. This is why the profound man can direct the course of events according to his ideas from within, no matter what forces prevail at the moment; for provided he recognizes their own proper meaning and uses them accordingly, provided he is conscious of the creative meaning of the whole dialectics, there is nothing over which he cannot gain ascendancy. It is true that this has never as yet been practically the case, with the exception perhaps of the mythical first rulers of China, that anybody has been a sovereign ruler in this god-like sense; such rule presupposes a fulness of power from above on the one hand, and on the other a concentric understanding co-operation from below which has as yet never been achieved. For this reason it is typical that whoever rises to the highest plenitude of power, first of all becomes conscious of the narrow limits restricting him. Many a man who as a civil servant cherished the most thorough reformatory plans, discards them when he becomes a minister, consoling himself with the example of Solomon's skepsis. . . .

That sovereign god-like rule presupposes above all a

depth of conscious Sense-understanding which has never as yet been attained. Even the greatest rulers we know of were consciously for the most part *Realpolitiker* in the psychological sense. Thus it is true that Constantine the Great saved the Roman Empire, which would otherwise have fallen to pieces, by relating back its outward organization to the profounder Significance of Christianity; but consciously that most cynical of all Machiavellians was merely guided by the recognition that the Roman Empire required some kind of spiritual cementation, and that something of that sort was at hand in the form of the Christian religion which personally he possibly hardly knew.<sup>1</sup> But in principle it *is* possible that a sovereign should rule from so superior a vantage. More than this: at this very moment it is becoming practically possible, quite apart from the question of personality, thanks to the higher level of Sense-perception generally attained. For we are capable today of *creating* destiny; this depends only on the degree to which understanding has become flesh. If the level of understanding we advocate here were to become embodied in vital human volition to the extent that the impulses usually blindly driving men from without would manifest themselves as personal free initiative, then the goal of "giving a meaning to what is otherwise meaningless" would be reached. Then that which drives man onward from within would become the clearly understood lodestar, and all dependence on outward things would cease. For it is fundamentally the same, whether one is outwardly or inwardly determined. There was one among my disciples who revelled in cosmic emotions; these

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<sup>1</sup> As far as I know, Wells in his *Outline of History* was the first to give utterance to this idea.

emotions were dependent in the form of moods on a higher and real connexion, and he felt himself to be living on the periphery of this connexion. Him I taught to centre the cosmos within himself; I taught him: you can be the centre as well as you can be the periphery. As long as you are the latter, you are dependent on the cosmic forces; otherwise the latter express themselves by means of your personal thinking and volition. The shifting of the centre was achieved; and there emerged a new man.—The same shift of centre can in the long run be achieved on a grand scale, in political life. For, in principle, everybody is capable today of grasping Significance beyond the letter by reason of the objectively existing higher level of understanding. Therefore the whole of the *Zeitgeist* demands the very thing I am teaching: the triumph over destiny.

RULERS in the sense I mean have possibly never yet existed. There have been none, at any rate, who consciously represented the higher level of consciousness required. It is symptomatic that the only men who ever guided mankind from the basis of pure Significance were the great founders of religion. This is the reason why they live on independently—even more independently of their respective embodiments than do the spirits of Cæsar and Bismarck—of all dogmatic faith and develop into ever greater powers, the more profoundly they are understood. The real hour of Christ and Buddha will come, can come only, when the *meaning* of their teachings will have been fully understood, and when for that reason it will be able to work unfettered; every discrepancy between the inherent laws of Significance and those of Expression lessens



the power of the former; this is true of understanding as well as of creating. But the founders of religion only dealt with the absolute; temporal questions did not affect them. This is the reason why their influence has only at times and for a short duration advanced man as a political being. Every Church in the long run has congealed into a reactionary power—and this was so of natural necessity. The worldly leaders capable of directing the course of history from the basis of Sense-understanding are yet to come. But now they *will* come. The adequate representative personalities always appear as soon as their influence is historically possible. And the fact that the men our age requires were previously impossible is not to be wondered at. History is at the very beginning of its course, however long it may appear to us. There is no earthly reason why our planet should not remain inhabitable for some hundred thousand years to come, and why it should not be inhabited by human beings. As opposed to this, the whole of mankind has hitherto known no more than at the utmost some 10,000 years of culture; moreover, they were cultures of infinitesimal minorities within the nations and classes, interconnected neither in space nor in time. Thus, up to the present day, it is impossible, considering the comparatively short space of time, that much more than a first unskilled tuning of the instruments should have taken place. If one views history from this angle, the evident failure of all ages and the typical “in vain” of all final results appear less tragic—and maybe this is the only right way to consider them. Hitherto nothing better has happened on the whole than that error and incapacity have led themselves *ad absurdum*; for since it is the possibility of erring which

above all constitutes man as opposed to the animal, this quality had first of all to come into evidence. And this process will still continue for a long time to come. It is but a very short time since man had any correct idea of the external world on any plane; even today the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the earth think according to the alogical categories of the *participation mystique* (Lévy-Brühl). We Westerners (and we alone) master external nature to a certain extent only since a few short decades—but we have proved so little fitted inwardly for even so modest a sovereignty, that the material power overwhelmed us at once and almost buried us beneath its weight in the fated issue of the World War, which in days to come humanity will look at much in the same light in which the Bible views the Deluge. For as yet we have no mastery whatsoever over *human* nature. With regard to the latter we are more or less in the position of the savage with regard to the external world, and unless this state of things is definitely changed on a large scale—how is freedom to work itself out in full self-consciousness and sovereignty? But the chief obstruction in the way of progress has hitherto lain on the intellectual plane. We master only what we have understood; those powers only which we comprehend can we safely put to our uses; only the objectively valid concept of a connexion makes the latter objectively subservient to the mind, because otherwise truth lacks the quality of transferableness. This is the reason why the great pioneers of history have hitherto achieved so lamentably little. This is the reason why all periods of cultural and individual perfection have at some point or another been cut short without there being any kind of continuation.

No, we are as yet at the very beginning. But precisely we who live and work today are fortunate enough to stand at the critical point, from the basis of which freedom will for the first time be able to manifest itself in full sovereignty. We have probably reached *the* critical point in the history of mankind; one which is more important even than that marking the appearance of Christ. Not in the sense that similar great personalities can be expected to emerge, however great the number of those who hope for them; but that the period of the true effect of the great personalities history has hitherto brought to the surface can only now set in; and above all, that those who are personally less great can live from out of the equal Spirit of the Depth. Christ founded his leadership on the fact that he alone possessed Life "in himself." Now that the possibility of perceiving Significance beyond the letter has, from being an accidental and merely personal possibility become a historical one, now conscious self-determination can begin on a large scale. Thus, the true history of mankind begins only now. The fundamental problems of the communion of the peoples and the individuals could not possibly be practically solved, before the animal side of human nature had been understood and penetrated to the extent that inner freedom could manifest itself to a certain degree. This penetration has now set in.

**T**HUS the statesman, like the philosopher, must in the first instance learn immediate Sense-perception; he must learn to live and to rule from the basis of Significance. This Significance lies at a greater depth than what I described as the spiritual background of history in the preceding chapter: it lies in the vital

sources of all historic Life. Of this I shall treat in greater detail in the next chapter. The context of the present subject dealing with the connexion of politics and wisdom in the form of a direct practical problem still requires the answer to one other question for its solution; the question has already been answered implicitly, but not clearly enough to preclude the possibility of misunderstandings. The question is the following: what will be the attitude of a statesman, capable of the full understanding of Significance, with regard to *Realpolitik* in the usual sense of the word?—*Of all Realpolitiker he will prove the most positive.* No one will be less of an ideologist than he. Only the time-honored way of acting is endowed with a new meaning in his case. Whereas the average politician considers facts (in the widest sense) as the last resort, he sees in them only the letters by means of which he realizes Significance in a conscious and sovereign manner.

For no meaning can be realized otherwise than by the adequate means of expression. In the Lun-Yü (XIII, 3) there is the following passage: "Tsě Lu said: 'The Prince of Wei is waiting to transfer the state affairs to your hands. What will be your first care?' The sage (Confucius) replied: 'What is necessary above all is to set right the designations.' Tsě Lu said: 'Is that really so? You are evading the question. What is the use of such a rectification?' The sage answered: 'How uncultured you are, Lu! Whatever the noble man does not know, he passes over, as it were. If the designations are wrong, the words do not adapt themselves to the Significance of the things. If the words do not fit, the affairs of the state do not thrive; if the affairs are not thriving, the rites and music are not

honoured; if the rites and music are not honoured, the punishments inflicted by the law do not prove correct: if the punishments inflicted by the law are not correct, the people finds no support for hand or foot. Therefore, the noble man chooses his designations in such a way that they can be employed in discourse without doubt of misinterpretation, and he forms his discourses in such a manner, that they can be turned into actions without uncertainty. For the noble man no part of his utterances is unimportant.' ” In the records of Kuan Chung—of an age prior to that of Confucius—there is this passage: “With regard to the designations given by man three things must be observed: Order (government), sense of propriety and service. With respect to the designation of things two things must be observed: rectification and scrutiny. These five factors form the foundation of the government of the state. If the designations are correct, there are law and order; if they do not tally, there is confusion; if there are no designations at all, there is death. This is the reason why the rulers of old attached so much importance to the designations.” And in the *Ch'un ts'in fan lu*, a record of the second century before Christ, we read: “The key to the government of the Empire lies in the examination of the distinction of proportions in size; the key to the distinction of proportions in size lies in the exact observation of the designations and appellations. The designations are the principal points of the Great Law. One fixes the meaning of these principal points in order to be able to observe the material importance belonging to them; then what is right and what is wrong can be determined, and whatever opposes order or is



in harmony with it becomes quite evident. Thus the effect penetrates the universe."<sup>1</sup>

As shown here, the most ancient Chinese wisdom has already grasped the true importance of the expression for the life of the state. It has grasped it precisely at the point at which the advanced man of modernity as a rule entirely misunderstands it. I wrote in the above: the background of the world is so spiritual a thing that any mistaken expression results in non-sense, whereas, on the other hand, every correct formulation helps new Sense-connexions to achieve empiric effects which could not hitherto come into evidence. Modern man takes this into conscious account only on the plane of exact science. The latter represents something more than mere grammar only in so far as the exact idea of facts establishes the inner contact with profounder layers of Spirit; for which reason the man of research who extends his activities only to facts sometimes achieves the same as he who directly realizes Significance. Only because this is so can there be any objective progress of recognition, independently of the profound spirits living at the time. But then modernity acts according to the truth in question only on the plane of science, and it holds of absolutely every plane. And it is true in the highest degree of the political sphere; to which sphere the scientific spirit shows itself—very characteristically—least

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. O. Franke, *Ueber die chinesische Lehre von den Bezeichnungen* (it was published in the *T'sung-pao*, series ii, vol. vii, Nr. 3 Leiden, 1906). After my lecture on "Meaning and Expression in Art and Life" in Hamburg in the year 1920, Professor Franke sent me this work of his with the observation that among the authors dealt with there were the earliest representatives of my Philosophy of Significance. They have indeed meant what I mean, only they have naturally expressed themselves according to an earlier grammatical and ritualistic level of culture.

equal; here *Realpolitik* means precisely what the exact statement of the facts means in the case of science. Now Chinese wisdom has seized the importance of the expression in concrete life at its very roots; for the whole of Chinese wisdom belongs to what we called in the first chapter the Fourth Storey of Language; this is why the principles mean everything to it, where Sense-realization is in question—and it is only right that they should.

But the relationship between Meaning and Expression is exactly the same in the case of tactics in the political field. As a thought becomes real only in its correct conceptual formulation, in exactly the same way the political idea is realized only in the body of the existing forces—this is the reason why Sense-understanding postulates the most extreme *Realpolitik* in its particular expression. The facts of Life must absolutely be reckoned with; never and under no circumstances can they be left out of the question, however blind and absurd the acting forces may be. But the particular requirements of tactics, in their turn, relate back to principles which mean correct “designations” in the sense of the Chinese; their being left out of the question invariably meets with its punishment. I will mention some of these—choosing them at random—in order to show how everything concerning the expression has its particular grammar and syntax, and that no Meaning can be realized as it should be unless they are understood and kept to. These principles establish the connexion between the metaphysical and the empiric sides of Sense-realization. Whoever has not merely dabbled in educational work, but has been successful on that line, is aware of the fact that one can only further a person in so far as one accepts as the starting-point his

nature as it is, without harsh criticism; otherwise, one creates insurmountable resistances to one's own influence. (This is, of course, true in particular of all self-education—whoever does not know how to be thus generous with regard to his own nature is a hopeless case.) On the plane of politics things are exactly similar. Here in the first instance all psychic forces, opinions, habits, dogmata, no matter what they are worth in themselves, must be accepted as realities; with regard to this principle there can be no question of rational judgment. And among these forces which have to be treated as realities the chief force is the *will* of the people. The observation of this principle of taking the will of the people into account as an ultimate reality is the fundamental reason of the success of England's imperialistic policy; its non-observation is the reason of Germany's corresponding failure. When the Germans took possession of the Baltic States they brought nothing but good in the objective sense—but they did not take into account the will of the Esthonians and Latvians in their practical measures; thus they found themselves face to face with a closed front of opposition, and no good effects they worked ever created a feeling of gratitude. The British first of all acknowledged the Esthonian and Latvian wishes as legitimate in principle. However high the price in blood and money they afterwards demanded—it was willingly and gratefully paid, because the will of the people had been fundamentally taken into account. Of course, there is the negative counterpart to the principle that psychic facts should absolutely be treated as real forces: *non-existent* realities must on no account whatsoever be taken into consideration. And here again Germany has failed in the

most exemplary way during the World War, so that this fact alone suffices to explain its issue. The ideas of William II, which unfortunately were very determinant, bespoke no modern reality whatsoever. The world-views and premises of most of the German generals belonged to a dead and gone past. That which should have won Germany sympathy—*i.e.*, its ability, power of organization, etc.—called forth the very opposite sentiments. In this connexion as early a thinker as Men-  
cius, who evidently witnessed similar cases, has made the appropriate observation: "Whoever wishes to win appreciation by proficiency [*Tüchtigkeit*] will not succeed. But whoever works good effects through his proficiency will win the approbation of the world. He whom the world does not recognize in its inmost heart will never succeed in becoming the king of the world. . . ." In all these respects the Germans as *Realpolitiker* have committed all the errors and blunders of the ideologists during the World War. And since then they are continuing to err, nothing daunted. If political parties are an evil, it obviously does not follow that they should be fought; that merely strengthens them and at best creates a party of non-partisans of any party. In Germany political parties belong to the articles of faith, and such should never be disputed. A clever Italian, greatly wondering at the German ideologism, once in my presence uttered the following witty observation: "I cannot understand the conservative politicians of the revolutionized countries. One should first ascertain which are the ideologies in which the masses absolutely believe; then one should post them up as programs on all the walls. Afterwards one can do whatever one pleases." He was right; *afterwards* one can

do as one pleases, not before. The psychic powers must be treated like natural processes. One cannot change them as such, but as soon as one understands them, it is possible to give them whatever direction one pleases.

In this connexion there are several other practical principles which have never failed because they, too, belong to the grammar and syntax of the possible expression of a political Significance. First and foremost among these is *consistency*. A line of conduct once recognized as correct should be kept to under all circumstances. Why? Because steadiness is always superior to unsteadiness in the long run; this is the reason why even consistent stupidity not infrequently triumphs over desultory intelligence. Now if it is a question of a consistent mind grasping what is true to Sense, then it is sure to triumph because all accidental occurrences willingly adjust themselves to the true Sense-connexion recognized. But consistency remains the principal thing. Germany's defeat was due in a very great measure to the fact that it had no fixed ends in view during the war. On the other hand, the chief reason of England's ultimate success lay in the fact that it had certain ends in view (ends, by the way, which, if I am rightly informed, Northcliffe dictated on his accession to the Office of Propaganda on the grounds that nothing could be done without the existence of an immutable goal).

The second principle I wish to mention here is that of the *insurmountable* limits. Just as every thought is true only when viewed from a certain distance—if one draws too near to it, its outlines grow vague as in the case of an impressionist picture; if one steps back too far from it, the eye loses its vital point—just so each



goal is attainable and maintainable only within definite limits. This was the great art of Bismarck. By self-restraint he made a friend of defeated Austria and stabilized his creation of the Empire in spite of its most exposed position; and if the military men had not outvoted him—who knows?—then perhaps even the problem of Alsace-Lorraine would not have remained unsolved; and it is this problem which more than anything else prepared the World War in the soul of the French. Self-restraint has also always been England's chief asset. It has always perceived the right moment not only when to give way, but even when to stand up with all its energy for what it opposed before. Owing to the fact that it has as yet never let the psychological moment pass unused, indubitable defeat has always in the long run turned out to its advantage. This is sure to be the turn things will take in India. A high official there said to me many years ago: "Of course, we shall not be able to keep India in the long run. Even today it is possible only because we are putting ourselves at the head of the reformatory movement. But the day will come when it will send us flying. Well, then it will become the task of our statesmanship to make it a better business to leave than to stay." Indeed, before a goal vehemently longed for appears sure to be attained, the peoples are willing to pay a high price for it.

The third principle I should like to mention here is that of *effect*. Theoretical correctness means nothing at all on the political plane; what is necessary is to realize what has been recognized as correct *by means* of the forces existing at the moment, be they the blindest mass-moods. Here lies the eternal truth of Machiavellism. Machiavelli was the first to become consciously

aware of the fact that the only important things on the political plane are the resultants, for which reason the component parts must be differently chosen according to the character of the age. Since the new age which dawned with the Renaissance had disavowed all bounds, since the awakening of the purely self-dependent individuality had destroyed the moral cosmos of the Middle Ages and considered egotism as both its first and its last law—for *this reason* could the clever Florentine glorify the technique of a Cæsar Borgia. Had he written his book of the Prince in an age when the mediæval code of honour still existed, he would for the same reasons have stood up for a very different kind of political morality, for personally Machiavelli was anything rather than a representative of practical Machiavellism. Now today nothing could be more unwise than to act according to the letter of the *Principe*, precisely if one would be true to its spirit. The consciousness of the masses has awakened to such a degree, that it is not wise to misuse ideals merely as tactical means; a thing Frederick the Great was still able to do unconcernedly. The very same point of view which made lies and crimes appear appropriate in the days of Machiavelli, henceforth recommends an increasingly consistent adherence to truthfulness and justice. This will prove true in the case of the Entente, particularly with regard to the monstrous lie concerning Germany's exclusive guilt, which forms the basis of the juridical murder of Versailles. The voices of Truth cannot be suppressed for long; the final victory will belong to them. Lord Northcliffe's grand success may possibly be the last of its kind—the near future will already consider him as a warning example. The principle of effect—the soul

of Machiavellism—must remain determinant; but the Significance of what is willed and the *Zeitgeist* must be understood, otherwise the Machiavellian is the very man to err most fatally in the means he employs.

The fact is that certain actions do not in certain ages or do not any longer lead to lasting success. Any policy which does not take into consideration the fundamental demands of the socialistic conscience will henceforth never again lead to good results. Unqualified man, appreciated purely according to the Eros and not according to the Logos—the fundamental statements on this point of Leonie von Ungern-Sternberg should be read<sup>1</sup>—demands his rights, and as far as they are in harmony with the Significance of things he will gain them. The absolute respect for the individuality of other men and peoples—hence the postulate of self-determination—represents so universal a postulate today, that it will doubtless find its historic realization. Therefore, it must appear unpractical, to say the least of it, to adjust one's policy to the antipole of this idea. The Soviet government possesses a tremendous power of attraction, in spite of everything it actually does, because in words it stands up for that postulate steadfastly and through everything. Furthermore, it belongs to the essential character of the present *Zeitgeist*, that it is impossible today to conquer, to assimilate and enslave with any hope of lasting success. And above all, today Machiavellism demands an adjustment to the future and not to the past; for in any age of such accelerated renewal as the one we are living in, the past no longer stands for a living ideal. Viewed in this light, the present state

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<sup>1</sup> Compare her booklet, *Der Sinn des Sozialismus* (Darmstadt, Otto Reichl Verlag), which should be soon translated into English.

of France appears most tragic and hopeless. France is continually insisting on its "right." Up to the year 1918 this idea belonged to a living present; therefore it had great moral power. Since then it has deteriorated into a mere postulate of maintaining or restoring an obsolete state of things, hence it relates to a dead right. This is why France's *droit* is being progressively less understood and appreciated, for history recognizes only what is alive. This case, too, has been correctly foreseen and preunderstood by Chinese wisdom. In the *Lü shi ch'un ts'in* (third century before Christ) we find the following: "If the designations are correct, law and order prevail; if the designations are destroyed, there is confusion. Whoever causes the destruction of the designations spoils the language. Then the admissible stands for the inadmissible, the correct for the incorrect, the wrong for what is not wrong. Wherever there is confusion, the designations of the law are not correct. When the leaders of men are of an inferior kind and yet seem to make use of the sublime, listening to the Good and doing what is correct, the harm consists in that what they call sublime corresponds to the inferior, what they consider as good corresponds to the vile, and what they call admissible corresponds to that which opposes law and order. Thus the designations of the law have a different acceptation and the objects clothed in sounds have a different meaning. The sublime becomes the inferior, the Good becomes the vile, and the admissible becomes the opposition to law and order. Thus the confused Prince of Tsi knew how to use the expression *shi*, but he knew not what it meant" (O. Franke's translation).

Thus there do exist principles for every possible pol-

icy, but on the other hand, there never can be rules. There can be rules only where the situations remain immutably the same; for only in that case can problems be solved *in abstracto* and once and for all. On the plane of individualized life this can never be achieved. There it is always a question of single and unique situations, however alike many of them may appear; therefore, they can be treated according to the same principles, but never according to unchanging recipes. This being so, every average tactician must for this one reason be politically superior to the greatest scientific mind. The scholar as a type thinks of the general norm—and precisely this standard is of no use where it is a question of achieving practical results; as a type he thinks of the idea in itself, and this is precisely the reason why he is unable to realize it. Once it is realized it no longer acts as a creative force. Now what is the practical link between the creative idea and reality? Such a thing must exist, since the phenomena can only be mastered from the basis of Significance. This link is represented by *tact*. Tact is the most essential, the profoundest thing within the compass of the given level of consciousness, a man can possess; it is a far deeper thing than all abstract intelligence. For tact means the vital possibility of establishing a living connexion between Significance and the existing means of expression with regard to the former's realization; tact means the gift of establishing the necessary relationship between the Eternal and the given unique situation of the moment. Therefore, tact is the one thing that every ruler must possess. He may lack everything else, if only he possesses tact. For one single tactless word can annul all objectively valid Right.



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### III. *World Ascendancy*

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OUR preceding considerations should have convinced you of the fact that the problem of politics, too, can be related back to the central problem of the Spirit. That which at first sight appears inferior and superficial can, without experiencing any alteration of its peculiarity, be given a profounder background. Everything *can* yet nothing *need* be superficial, just as nothing that is meaningless need remain so; exactly as by means of letters and words one can speak sense and non-sense, the time-honoured means of *Realpolitik* can effect something more essential than they ever did before. The one important thing is to what depth Significance is seized, to what degree one succeeds in creating the expression exactly corresponding to it. But our considerations finally led us far beyond our particular subject. The statesman became the realizer of Significance in general, statesmanship became *the* art of adequate expression. Ultimately the objective problem merged into the personal concerning the question as to the qualities he who desires to change the world from the basis of Significance must possess.

There we stopped in the last chapter. Now we must follow out this idea. We must draw a living picture of the man who corresponds to all the highest demands made in the two preceding chapters. This is indeed the way marked out for us: from the point of view of wisdom the objective never means the last resort. Since

Spirit only acts from within to the outside, the value of its manifestations ultimately depends on the personality, from which they proceed.

IF, IN order to be quite unprejudiced, we take a survey independently of our insights gained of the men who have been universally considered as the most superior and as the greatest—what have they been? Artists? No. The artist as a type is a medium; something great expresses itself by his means or through him, but it is hardly ever identical with his person. His personal centre rarely has its roots in his best—yet this should be the case, if he is to appear personally superior. This is why the Greeks and the Italians of the days of the Renaissance who had particular knowledge of the case and really knew how to judge, did not value the artist as a human type more highly, but less than many another.—Was it the thinker? Least of all. It is typical for the thinker to live consciously in an externalized world of representations, without any connexion with his creative self; whatever was brought forward against the ideologist applies to him as well.—Was it the sage? It was. But a closer inspection teaches us that only such sages live on as the acknowledged highest expressions of humanity, who were at the same time statesmen, or at least had the way of thinking of the statesman. This would mean a corroboration *e consensu gentium* of the result of the preceding chapter, that only the idealist who is a *Realpolitiker* at the same time works great practical effects. It is true that the statesman as opposed to the purely spiritual man in principle only deals with what is temporal and provisional. But since we are living in a temporal and changing world, his task

is the most important also as viewed from the spiritual standpoint; *for he alone knows how to effect the congruency of the temporal and the eternal*. Nor does his task in any way lie more at the surface than that of the sage; for he who thinks like a statesman must in the ideal case grasp Significance as profoundly as the former; and over and above that he must find the means to realize it perfectly within the body of the totality of life. The ideal case has never been realized up to the present day; but that its ideal location is here and nowhere else is conclusively proved by the one consideration that all great religions have been founded by spirits of a decidedly statesmanlike way of thinking. If within the course of history up to now the statesman proper as a type has embodied a lesser degree of Sense-perception than the intellectual, this means no contradiction to the fact that originally he occupies a favoured position. Surely, the statesman must be a sage as well in order to work the greatest effects, but above all the reverse is true; and this is the all-important thing from the point of view of wisdom.

But this leads to that other fact which we stated *implicite* in the last chapter, when proceeding from another starting-point, namely, that statesmanship as an original disposition means more than specific political talent: it means, generally speaking, the capacity to realize the Significance of the given moment. And the most pronounced and most universally developed representative of this quality is the statesman, because he effects Sense-realization with the richest means, from the broadest basis and with a view to the greatest ends. Therefore he must be considered as the prototype. This is also the reason why the importance for this world of the

philosopher who is exclusively bent on Sense-realization is most effectively measured by the standard of the former. He, too, can only express himself by means of the forces existent in his own time—in his case they are the given means of thinking. He, too, furthers recognition only to the extent that he brings the new into vital relationship with the old—*i.e.*, to the extent that he realizes what is possible at the moment. If he sets forth truths for the comprehension of which the organs are lacking, he achieves nothing. And what is true of psychological comprehensibility is equally true of objective correctness. The relationship between Sense-perception and *Realpolitik* is precisely the same as that between theoretical Significance and its exact scientific expression. Exactitude of expression is really the *Realpolitik* of the man of science. On the other hand, Machiavellism is, in principle, as justified and as little contradictory to the ideal as the application of the adequate concepts on the philosophical plane. Even tact plays the same part in both cases: only that thinker works real effects who knows how to put forward his recognitions; who knows what material to use and how to distribute it within space and time. If Flaubert's idea is incontestable, namely, that only well-written books may hope to last, the reason is that only the good writers are tactful in the sense defined in the preceding chapter. From the point of view of wisdom, science and politics, as well as art and ways of living, are, all of them, merely particular forms of Sense-realization; but the prototype of the realizer of Significance is represented neither by the artist nor by the philosopher, but by the statesman, because in his case the primacy of Sig-

nificance as well as the fundamental contingency of the means of expression come into the clearest evidence.

**B**UT before proceeding further we must look about us for a moment. The political theorists among the great thinkers of history have generally laid the emphasis the other way about, or at least in a way different from ours. Thus Plato was of the opinion that the philosophers as such should rule. How far the great Athenian proved a success as the counsellor of the tyrant Dionysius cannot be clearly inferred from the historical records. But the utopianism of his idea of the state, the narrowness of the practical horizon revealed by his political writings, as well as his demand for coercion, leave the impression that as a ruler he would hardly have done better than other theorists and intellectuals when they have the misfortune to come to power. The practical effects achieved by Eisner and Landauer should remain symbolical for all rule by philosophers. Moreover, during his stay in Soviet Russia, Bertrand Russell, that acute mathematician and philosopher, was struck by the astonishing similarity of the Bolshevik state with that of Plato. Therefore, Plato must have been mistaken when he conceived himself as the type of a ruler. Philosophers, as far as they have the original character of the statesman, would certainly be the best qualified of all rulers; as theorists and intellectuals they are not, even though in every case they were able to indicate correctly what should be done; but all the philosophers of the West since the early days of Antiquity, with possibly the one exception of the great Leibniz, were mere theorists whose capacity of



Sense-realization did not extend beyond the realm of abstractions.

Now the founders of religion as opposed to the philosophers have frequently been endowed with the nature of the ruler; for they proceeded directly from the basis of Spirit, and not from that of some intermediate sphere; therefore, they involuntarily took into account the specific nature of the phenomena. Jesus was a very practical man, in spite of the radicalism of His teaching and however little He thought of temporal things personally; this is the only reason why His teaching could find in the grand organization of the Catholic Church, which excludes nothing, if not an absolutely adequate body, yet the most visible place of vantage. Mahomet, like Moses, was a most shrewd and acute politician; and as to Buddha, he possessed the spirit of the ruler to the highest degree; I know of nothing more royal than the spirit out of which he shaped his mild teaching. But then the founders of religion never thought of this world as such. That is why what is true of most of the individual personalities is not true of their type. Their type, too, occupies an eccentric position with regard to this world, and for this reason it does not, whatever ecclesiastic writers may have written, represent the type of the perfectly superior man.—With regard to the founders of orders one need hardly direct attention to the political qualities of their characters. What could St. Benedict have achieved, had he not mastered human nature from a superior point of vantage? All the great founders of orders were statesmen, perhaps with the one exception of St. Francis, whose order became what it proved to be in later times, no thanks to him, but through others, and in many respects in opposition to

his own spirit. Personally I do not hesitate to praise Ignatius of Loyola as the greatest of all politicians; for what he has achieved is something altogether unique: since his death his order has almost uninterruptedly kept on the same level in the sense of spiritual leadership and the quality of the ruling personalities, whereas in other cases the first successor already initiates a continuous levelling down. This means the triumph of a psychological genius which, of all the organizers of history, Ignatius alone possessed. But on the other hand, he was anything rather than a sage; for it was not profoundest personal insight and a sense of ultimate personal responsibility which guided his actions, but devotion to a blindly accepted dogma and another's will. Metaphysical untruthfulness—which certainly does not exclude personal truthfulness—is the empiric premise of the Jesuit. To a less degree this is true of every type of believer. For this fundamental reason priests cannot under any circumstance be considered as ideal types, however frequently they have ruled on earth; and this consideration does away with the idea of a Theocracy being the best form of rule—it inevitably deteriorates into priest-rule, whatever kind of proxyship one may simulate, since God does not rule personally; and wherever priests rule, they cannot help acting in a particularly casuistic, Machiavellian (in the evil sense) and deceitful manner, because they represent rigid dogmata and yet must act in a worldly-wise way.

Thus this detour, too, leads us back to our last statement. And the latter coincides with the conviction of all peoples and all ages. Whatever the momentary balance of power may have been, mankind has never

recognized either the founder of religion, or the priest, or the man of science, or the artist, or the philosopher as the ideal type. It has in all ages seen the ideal in the sage endowed with the nature of the statesman; the sage laying the emphasis on his statesmanship; and in all ages it has visualized this ideal in the image of the *royal man*. This is absolutely true of all men. It is true of the literary nation of the Chinese, which considers the mythical emperors of primeval days as the embodiments of her ideal; it is also true of the Hindoo nation of philosophers and priests which does not reverence Jajnavalkya and Vyasa, but Krishna, Manu and King Janaka as her highest exemplars. In the same sense all peoples without a single exception do not picture their omniscient gods as sages or saints, but as kings. Now *why* is the king unanimously recognized as the type of the most superior and free man?—The answer to this question brings us to the issue of all our previous trends of thought. It is not because he possesses external power. However much he may require it and although the prestige it confers must not be underrated—in his case it is presupposed as belonging to him, and truly so: to the inwardly inferior man no position of power is of any avail; whoever is not born to rule cannot stand a dominating position. No, the royal man is considered as the highest man, *because he is inwardly superior to the totality of Life*. Because by nature he stands above that which binds all the others. Because he represents the highest expression of statesmanlike superiority.

It is a question of level. *Par définition*, as it were, to the king no particular formation can mean the last resort. He dare not be one-sided like the political theo-

rist, like pure practitioners or experts; he dare not be inwardly inferior like those beasts of burden, the men of routine and the scientific calculators. Nor dare he be a mere tactician, for his concern is reality as it is; nor dare he be a realist in the sense of a blind believer in facts, for in that case his superiority would not be real superiority. In order to assure the primacy of Significance he cannot consider any fact as the last resort; he must in every case proceed from the question of its Significance within the total connexion of things. Therefore, he must actually have his stand beyond Good and Evil, for every day of his life he must work good effects by means of Evil. This sovereign attitude alone can be called a perfectly superior attitude. Therefore, the ruler-sage (*Herrscher-Weise*) as a type does indeed represent the highest type of man.

THE ruler-sage is the highest type of man, because he is bound to no particular kind of appearance, but is, on the contrary, superior to each and all; because all empiric processes, as viewed from his standpoint, naturally mean mere language, not Significance, and the choice of one means of expression or another is a question of mere political tactics and not a vital question. Now let us picture to ourselves as concretely as possible, on the basis of the postulates we can make by reason of the general insights gained up to now, the highest ruler-sage theoretically imaginable. He should and could obviously be superior to *absolutely* all nature. For absolutely everything that is not Significance belongs to the latter; the empiric psychological part of man no less than the material external world. Absolutely all configurations belong to it, not only those

which are visibly objectified and materialized, but the psychic and spiritual as well, right up to the highest ideals, as far as they are materialized in the form of definite concepts, dogmata, programs and prejudices. Strictly speaking, all formations are material. That only cannot be called matter which produces and vitalizes them from within. Therefore it must be possible in principle—if world-ascendancy is at all possible and if its degree depends upon the depth of Significance in which consciousness is centred; if it is vouchsafed to man to take root in progressively profounder regions of Sense, in correspondence to which new forces are set free—to become superior to the whole World.

These considerations in the first instance lead to the following result: it means a theoretical misunderstanding practically creating inward limitations, to be hostile to matter for spiritual reasons. For *all* formations belong to it. If for fear of matter one tries to force something supposed to be “spiritual in itself” into a lasting and unchangeable expression, that which one succeeds in grasping becomes matter by the very process; the resulting formation is very much more rigid and therefore more densely material and restricting than if one had been less bent upon escaping it. Hence the particularly pronounced inward tiedness of the ideologist. This is the one reason why all solutions of the problem of Superiority setting aside or denying Nature must fundamentally miss the mark. The Stoics who wished to liberate themselves in reality only created a psychic armour for themselves, guarding them from experience (*Erlebnis*)—but this armour proved a greater restriction to their spirit than genuine suffering would have been; indeed, an immense apparatus of rigid con-



cepts is necessary in order to seclude oneself after the manner of the Stoics. The same is true in the most superficial manner (because here it is not even a question of self-created ties) of the modern man of duty. Monasticism, considered according to its general meaning, may represent one of the best ways to change nature into a more pliant means of expression, but as a lasting and final condition it means a narrowing down, not a triumph over nature. Hence the unheard-of regulation of monastic life: only in the observation of laws as rigid as that otherwise known in the case of dead stars alone, can there be freedom of spirit under such conditions—and who does not see that the monk is to that extent even more bound by nature than the man of the world? The road to true freedom has nothing to do with the restriction of the formations as such. Man becomes freer to the extent that he rises above them and reads and lives through them. Remember the similes of the Four Storeys of Language and of the relation of the unlimited and manifold Meaning which can be expressed by means of the same twenty-five letters of the alphabet: freedom exists only in the realm of Significance. From the point of view of freedom it is, therefore, all the same by what means it manifests itself, and whether they are rich or poor: the one important thing is that consciousness should be rooted in the region of Significance. Asceticism and discipline, like all other restrictions of nature, can only be recognized as true to Sense in so far as they prepare the way to the realization of Significance, just as one must acquire a methodic knowledge of grammar and syntax in order finally to gain the free mastery of the language. *After* that, asceticism should become superfluous.

Practically, however, things are yet different and even exactly the reverse of what stoicism, asceticism and abstract idealism suppose them to be: since ascendancy over Nature is the measure of freedom, man is all the greater and all the freer, the richer the nature he rules. It does not require a great deal of art to rule so poor and narrow a nature as is the typical result of monkish education; the mastery of one which embraces and recognizes *all* that is human is more difficult and of far greater value. In fact, whoever completely masters his nature need deny none of its qualities, *for it is no longer necessary*. He need not even disavow the Evil that is in him. It is the surest sign of inferiority, if a man accepts only the so-called Good within himself and only knows how to work good effects by its means. The spirits of Light and Darkness are organically inter-related in all who have not yet entered finally the realm of Light; it is impossible to achieve essential progress unless one acknowledges both in their own places.<sup>1</sup> And now we have reached the last link in this chain of thought. Let us call to mind the simile of the tree which must stretch down its roots more deeply into the soil, the higher its crown rises toward the sky: accordingly, growing wealth requires a correlative increase of depth in order to be mastered by the Spirit. *Therefore, wealth and not poverty must be postulated precisely for the sake of Sense-realization*. Hitherto asceticism considered the effort at poverty, the so-called mortification, to be the way to salvation. In so far as it aimed at human perfection, it was mistaken. It is

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<sup>1</sup>I have given a complete exposition of my view of the problem of Good and Evil in the chapter, "The Ethical Problem," of *The Recovery of Truth*.

precisely the mission of wealth understood as a task, which brings into effect the powers of the deep. This consideration proves conclusively that the man of kingly sovereignty who accepts everything from his superior vantage, holds the highest position among men.

ERE we proceed, I must recapitulate and link up several things I have already said in previous chapters and enlarge upon several others, in order that nothing should remain dark. The world of Significance is as continuous a whole as that of the phenomena. But whereas the latter represents a mechanically unified system, the former is an organism. Just as every cell within the body, every organ, has its vital *raison d'être* in the *rôle* it plays within that body, just so our life must have a meaning, in order to appear worth living; and just so every Meaning grasped in its turn represents the symbol of a deeper Meaning. There is no limit to possible depth. Now how does a Meaning achieve its manifestation? Only through something more superficial. This surface must be completely organized. In order to become capable of realization, every new and profounder Sense-perception presupposes a complete organization of the whole organism—from Significance understood to its external appearance. Herein lies the value of science from the point of view of progress; this is the reason why development must proceed gradually. Every more general and exact conceptual comprehension of reality creates a new starting-point for the achievement of its mastery; the understanding of every new thing presupposes a definite organism of what is already known. Now whoever has completely organized the entire body of his mind and soul, so that it obeys the

inmost impulse unresistingly, is free upon his own level, for what is deepest in him does not obey, it commands. Thus one can be free even as an official bound to the letter, as a monk or a slave—provided bondage corresponds to spiritual limitation: in this case, Being works itself out autonomously by means of accepted bounds. Only here the centre of consciousness lies near the surface; therefore, a believer in the letter, however inwardly free he be, remains inferior from the metaphysical point of view. The same is true of every kind of blindly believing person. Not one of these, even though he believed in Absolute Truth, is self-determined; if a truth is not grasped by personal consciousness, its representative is not autonomous—yet the degree of inner sovereignty alone decides upon the personal importance of a man.

Now this sovereign power grows in exact proportion to Sense-understanding and its embodiment within the totality of Life. The deeper the forces representing the direct means of expression of a man, the greater the number of forces of the surface to which he is psychologically superior; and the depth of the forces, again, is proportionate to that of the region of Significance. If a man centred his consciousness in the profoundest Significance and had completely organized his organism from the surface down to this depth, he would be *perfectly* free. For then he would no longer be subjected to the laws of Nature; on the contrary, Nature would be subservient to him on all planes, just as language as a fully mastered means of expression is subservient to the poet. This would provide the true epistemological reason of the aforesaid, namely, that such a man would no longer need to deny anything appertaining to Nature. The laws

of Nature in themselves are insuperable; the norms of Logic are binding in the same sense and as absolutely as is the circulation of the blood and the structure of the skeleton. There is freedom *solely* in the realm of Significance; only impulses of change proceeding from this realm can enter into the course of Nature's routine; a thing which on the plane of the latter expresses itself in this: that in the case of all physiological processes connected with Freedom it is a question of explosions and, generally speaking, of decisions, the possibilities of which are identical with the various solutions of the same problem, among which Spirit makes its choice. From the empiric point of view, therefore, freedom exists only in the moment of indifference, leaving room for choice; to use our own terms: in the moment when a Meaning, still hovering in mid-air, as it were, becomes expression; no sooner has a decision been taken than man is absolutely bound.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, freedom is the primary phenomenon in relation to the former in the same sense that Meaning is primary to the expression. Practically freedom realizes itself in proportion to the extent that it becomes conscious. This, however, happens in this way, that the tiedness, though externally it remains the same, grows to be more and more a means of expression, as consciousness centres itself in ever profounder layers of Significance; thus man does not direct the external course of Nature's processes by breaking its laws, but by mastering them from the height of superior understanding. To repeat, the profounder the layer of Significance in which consciousness has its creative centre, the greater the ascendancy over Nature. Therefore the *greatest* ascend-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. the full elaboration of the problem of freedom in *The Recovery of Truth*.



ancy actually need deny nothing belonging to Nature—its totality has become its means of expression. This explains how God can be imagined as the creator and preserver of the world as a whole, in spite of its being full of Evil.

Therefore, the sentence that not poverty but wealth must be postulated for the purpose of the realization of Spirit demands the following addition: *in principle, wealth and depth stand in a relation of proportionality*. But here a qualification sets in, and this explains why this equation has hitherto remained unperceived: it is true on the plane of Significance, but not of the facts. Therefore, it must be realized, in order to become real; therefore, it is no wonder that most of the data of history up to now argue against its truth. But at this very moment, or from now onward, it *can* be realized, because, thanks to the objective progress made in recognition, the spiritual organism of man is completely organized to the extent that he is capable of embodying profounder Significance. Therefore, the royal man we construed, the ruler-sage who should be superior to the whole world, is not a chimera in spite of his never having existed, but an exemplar of possible reality.

AT THIS point let us recall the fact that neither the philosopher, nor the artist, but the statesman represents the prototype of the realizer of Significance, because his activity most purely represents both the primacy of Significance and the contingency of the means of expression. The nearer the surface, the more limited the Meaning, the more definite the formations to which it is bound. This is why in former ages the artist could be considered as the prototype of the Sense-realizer; the

artist who, as a rule, is capable only of *one* way of expression, the more important he is. In the case of a deepening making the acceptance and direction of *all* phenomena possible, there can no longer be any question of an *a priori* fixing of the means of expression; what is superficially characteristic of tactical *Realpolitik* alone is true in this case of every kind of activity. Why? *Because in this case everything depends on the ultimate Meaning.*

It is true that every formation as such has an intrinsic and direct Meaning which corresponds to it alone in accordance with the law of correlation of Meaning and Expression, a correlation best illustrated by the language in its lexicographic meaning and, apart from that, by formal science. But this immediate meaning in its turn can be understood as the symbol of a profounder one; and wherever such a profounder meaning is determinant, the sense proper of the formation no longer represents the last resort: in that case it is fundamentally open to multiple interpretations, a fact again best illustrated by language as such; for what is really meant lies upon another plane which the particular meanings in their turn only serve to express. Thus *every* kind of formation is open to multiple interpretations by everyone who has grown profound, in the same sense that the statesman realizes his ideal goal by means of whatever forces exist at the moment. For this reason it must practically be the first distinctive mark of the man grown profound, that he no longer takes seriously the formations as such. This has proved true in the earliest ages, wherever ultimate depth was determinant. The Hindoo sages were relativists with regard to dogmata and systems. In the same sense Christ denied the value of any kind of right-

eousness according to the laws; and Lao-tse taught, "The Great Significance was abandoned, and so there was morality and duty." For one who has grasped the meaning of morality, there can no longer exist absolute commandments and rules.<sup>1</sup> The moral law is nothing profound in itself; it is a question here of nothing deeper than one law of Nature among others; it is closely related to the law of the equality of action and reaction in the domain of physics, which fact has hitherto been best accounted for by the Hindoo doctrine of Karma (which the Hindoos only consider as belonging to natural science); and even that is still unsatisfactory. Hence "the moral phenomena" may have most various meanings, according to the circumstances. Morality is "a matter of course" in the sense that it represents the *minimum* of what a man should live up to, if he is to be superior to the animal. But for this very reason, everybody who can be called profound in any way, stands above morality, and whoever is truly profound is beyond Good or Evil as a matter of course.

Evil, too, is a necessary force in the economy of the world. At all critical times it is Evil, and not the Good, which represents the principle of renewal; thus all esoteric doctrines interpret the mark of Cain as a mark of Grace; thus it was Lucifer who brought the first illumination; thus in spite of all horrible facts the Satanic figures of the Bolsheviks stand in the front ranks of the fighters for a better future. Evil works purely negative effects only then and only as long as man is subservient to it, instead of mastering it. But when Nietzsche told mankind to grow bad again, he knew well what he was

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<sup>1</sup> I have dealt exhaustively with the problem of ethics from my point of view in the *Recovery of Truth*.

saying: indeed, all higher humanity begins on the plane above that of the moral contrast. It can only begin there, because the meaning of an action can never be understood on the grounds of rigid rules; according to the circumstances, the same thing may mean good or evil. From this point of view, I return once more to the plane of politics, in order to give a few more touches of colour to the preceding consideration; from this point of view we can fully understand the contempt of every great statesman for the ideologist: naturally for him there can exist only concrete, and no abstract problems, for in every situation the same Meaning demands another Expression in order to prove effective. What seems contradictory in this connexion is in reality identical. Therefore, practically as well as theoretically, true superiority always expresses itself in the form of relativism with regard to all formations and in the form of an extreme compliance with the necessities of the momentary situation. No great man ever was a dare-devil and venturer at all costs; a great man dares and forces a thing only when it tactically answers the purpose. Since he perceives to what extent and in what form the Significance he means can be realized at a given time, he says and does only what is useful and what means an approach to realization. In so far Bismarck's shortsightedness—he never undertook more than could be accomplished at the moment—and Buddha's pragmatism—he expressed only what the majority was capable of grasping—mean the same. For the same reason Socrates and Christ went to their deaths: they knew that their martyrdom furthered their ends. Surely they were no political opportunists in the usual sense of the word, but in their case, as in all great cases, pure idealism and the urge to profess coin-

cided with a practical eye for the given situation. This is why Christ surrendered to His enemies only when He felt that the hour had come; it is only with inferior persons that idealism and Machiavellism are incompatible; in the case of the superior man they are interdependent. The superior man can bear a degree of consciousness which would deprive an inferior man of all his inner assurance. The question has been and often is asked why God, in spite of His omnipotence, allows so much evil and misfortune to happen. The reason is probably the same that made it impossible for Jesus to help the resisting thief on the cross; the same that kept Confucius from repeating his utterances, if they were not understood at once; the same that forbids every profound man to try to persuade or force anybody. The profound man knows that all understanding being something creative comes from within; consequently it is a question of something absolutely spontaneous, which can never be brought about by coercion. Thus the Buddhists of the Northern School speak of the "stern way" of the Bodhisatva consisting in this, that at certain turning-points all their efforts are consciously and purposely directed toward the crumbling of the world. A believer in this teaching might think that Bodhisatvas of this description are at work at this very moment; for never within the memory of man has every reasonable decision aiming at the prevention of the catastrophe been so invariably frustrated at the last moment by some accidental occurrence. The Bodhisatvas leave Europe to crumble to pieces because they know that understanding is too inadequate to allow of any reasonable solution corresponding to the true state of things. Unfortunately, only personal experience—in the sense of an understanding of the true inward state,



as well as in that of the pernicious consequences it may lead to—ultimately teaches wisdom to the man who is originally unwise. Therefore, under certain circumstances, the capacity to look at suffering without coming to its relief means something more humane than giving way to natural compassion not only in the Bodhisatva, but even in the powerful man. This is why no great man ever was sentimental. For this reason none ever shrank from using violence in case of need. Tiedness, inertia, blindness are natural facts which do not change of their own accord. If the impulse effecting such a change is lacking, only painful experience can help. Whoever would really help others will rarely spare them experiences.

THUS the ever-valid correlation between Meaning and Expression expresses itself differently according to the level of Sense-perception. The profounder the latter and the greater the corresponding ascendancy, the wider the possibilities of interpreting the same facts. In the possibility of assigning various meanings to the latter by free choice, freedom comes into practical evidence. Freedom in its turn and ascendancy mean one and the same thing. The sage is above destiny in so far as the same thing that prostrates others does not affect him; a man like Cæsar directed the course of destiny by altering in his favour the more than frequent unhappy accidents which crossed his way; Jesus and Socrates chose death of their own free will because they recognized that what would have been an end for others, in their case meant the road to Life Eternal. Thus profoundness literally creates world-ascendancy. In principle, nothing can prevent the spirit from inbuilding any

kind of meaning into the events of life. Thus, even "miracles" are not only possible, but fundamentally a matter of course. Surely, the laws of Nature cannot be broken; but if from a depth of Significance new forces become active within Nature, this leads to a change of the phenomena incomprehensible on the grounds of any previous knowledge. Every inspiration, every flash of genius, every magic effect represents a true miracle, and Life itself, which has its ideal location beyond the phenomena, is not the least of these. In the same sense a complete triumph over destiny is possible. The destiny of the present is entirely a consequence of the free decisions of preceding generations. According to the decisions they took, other masses of Karma are set in motion. And man, on his side, decides in a more or less sovereign manner in accordance with his level of Sense-perception; he appears bound to the exact extent that he misunderstands Significance and fails to master the means of expression. The more the reverse is the case, the more perfect the congruency between the specific laws of the latter and that which they are meant to realize, the more completely is the human world of consciousness organized from the depth up to the surface, the more does nature obey Spirit. Thus, there is no doubt that some day it may become possible that destiny should be completely directed by conscious human spirit wherever it has no superhuman spiritual origin. This tremendous possibility will become most clear to you if I refer to the myth relating to the creation of the world. When the Biblical God created the world He uttered but a few words every day, in accordance with which the events take their course ever since. Had He said something ever so slightly different, and be this difference only the

shadow of a shade, we would today be living in a different world. Indeed, the correlation of Meaning and Expression is so absolute, and the formation once created forms so inalienable a part of the course of events subjected to Nature's laws, that the first primordial words of Creation have absolutely predetermined the way and the direction of all subsequent developments. They must have done so because they had to do with *primal origins*: if *they* are determined, if the same is true of the direction of further development, then the specific character of the latter follows as a matter of course. Now it was God who spoke those words of Creation; but viewed as an external phenomenon, His action itself was a mere trifle. Therefore, the external futility of man, too, does not mean an obstacle in the way of the triumph over destiny, provided it expresses the necessary depth of Spirit. For in the realm of Spirit the concept of extension lacks all meaning. Here, the smallest and the greatest mirror or reflect one another, *because only meaning counts*; here it is true that the macrocosm and the microcosm correspond to one another. If there exists the miracle of the association of ideas, then the greatest miracle of clairvoyance is equally possible, for both have the same Significance and their only difference is a technical one. In both cases an equally incomprehensible contact is established between things lying far apart in themselves. Telekinesy means no more mysterious a thing than the movement of man's own body through his mind, or as the setting in motion of tangible objects by means of the former—for both proceedings are identical and mysterious in the same sense. If the medium is *en rapport* with one only among the many, this means the same as the Kantian doctrine that "the world is my rep-

resentation"—and at the same time it proves the possibility of an unlimited number of worlds being able to interpenetrate.

Extension plays no part on the spiritual plane for the one reason that it belongs to Nature and the dimension of Spirit lies vertically to the dimension of the latter—*i.e.*, from within to the outside. Therefore here, for purposes of power it is solely a question of the depth of Sense-perception. If external power as an expression *corresponds* to Significance, it grows automatically just as money pours in to the man of business enterprise who knows how to take the right measures without his giving it a thought. It is true that no man will ever reach God's depths. But the depth he can reach suffices in order to conquer destiny as far as it is not of cosmic origin. Only—I must emphasize this again and again, because nothing seems so difficult to understand—the achievement of this end presupposes a complete and perfect organization of the world of consciousness from the surface down to the profoundest Significance, so that the use of a perfect *Realpolitik* becomes possible on the plane of Expression.

But once the complete organization has been achieved—what then? Then man would need do no more than God did on the First Day of the World, in order to act from out of the depths. For then the profoundest would act right up to the surface as naturally as a movement of the finger willed by the cerebrum takes place, without consciousness needing to know anything of the way. What man first realized in the form of dead machines will one day be true of all inferior life. One of the most important results of modern psychology is the fact that man need only picture a goal clearly to himself

in order that the unconscious should of its own accord find the way of its realization. Imagination creates reality in exactly the same way that God's imagination created the world. In other words: wherever the purely mental primary image exists, it realizes itself spontaneously. But it must be pictured *in the absolutely correct way*: this is the decisive point. Just as only the absolutely correct mathematical formula makes it possible to predetermine the specific expressions of a natural law, just so must the primary mental image be so true to Sense that it predetermines correctly all derivative meanings, in order that it should lead to positive creation. This is a truth asceticism has always known. Buddha demands the right word, the right deed, right thinking, right meditation—for only what is done from the basis of right adjustment leads to a good end. In the same sense modern psycho-therapeutics reckon with the importance of the right word to a degree hardly to be surpassed by the believers in magic formulas. The unconscious so infallibly accomplishes the suggestions of the superliminal consciousness, that the slightest mistake continues to act in the sense of Karma and, on the other hand, *one* correctly uttered right idea suffices to initiate astonishing changes for the better. This suffices to prove the Logos-quality of all happenings. But within the context of our present observations it proves this above all, that Significance realizes itself only by means of the *right* means of Expression. It proves the absolute necessity of the clearest *Realpolitik*. Now, if the latter is at work, then even a word uttered by man may ultimately move the world. For since it is its *meaning*, not the physical force of its embodiment which endows it with strength—here



the old magic belief is true—the smallness of man means no obstacle in his way to possible world-ascendancy.

**B**UT how does ascendancy, which means the same as freedom, manifest itself in the visible world? Here our road takes us back to the considerations of the first chapter of our introductory cycle: it is not a question of information and ability, it is one of Being. The Chinese, who of all men have best understood the meaning of ascendancy, mention the *Wu-wei*—i.e., involuntary activity or effectiveness as the first and chief characteristic of the true ruler. The Emperor Shun is said to have just sat there, and there was perfect harmony on earth. If a truly great ruler reigns, then—so the Chinese teaching goes—one is externally hardly aware of his existence; everyone feels independent and yet he acts according to the ruler's will. Whatever exists as Being works involuntarily, and only thus; it is impossible to be voluntarily superior—either one is superior as a matter of course, or one is not.

This is really so. All the prestige of old age rests upon natural superiority; its character which is known to all should provide the best illustration of the essence of *Wu-wei*. The characteristic of old age is the fact that the greater part of the "word" has become "flesh." Whereas the youth often thinks the greatest thoughts of a given life, it is typical that he lacks personal weight; his thoughts work only by themselves, never through the man. But the latter becomes more and more the case, the more experience, work and action shape and train the psychic body, the more the whole person in its multiplicity becomes the means of expression of knowledge. That precisely means *wisdom*. But this complete pene-

tration and organization does not merely mean that what was formerly separated is now brought into relation—it means the manifestation of *new* forces, which are all the more powerful, the more perfect the organization. Considered from a certain point of view, every man represents a mechanism of transference. The spiritual forces at his disposal do not live within his brain, but according to its organization his brain is capable of introducing other forces from spiritual worlds into empiric life. Hence the fundamental independence of talent of personality; hence that otherwise inexplicable phenomenon of mediumship; hence the possibility of coming into touch with deeper regions of spirit by means of a corresponding physical training.

But this mechanism of transference achieves its real purpose only when it does not introduce something alien from, but something profoundly rooted in the empiric Ego, so that the profoundest Self is expressed by all the powers of the former. That is the true meaning of the word having become flesh. But if the word has thus become flesh, it cannot help acting involuntarily, because in that case everything that is external is directly nourished from the centre of life; just as everybody lives not voluntarily, but involuntarily. The truth of this statement is corroborated by the trivial picture of every successful man. A man succeeds permanently only in what he does involuntarily; he only is a successful business man who involuntarily sees the world at every moment in relation to business co-ordinates; he only is a philosopher who involuntarily notices spiritual connexions before all others. For only in the case of such spontaneity does that essential qualification express itself through ability, which never fails because it is always

present. And what is true of technical activities is all the more true of the profoundest. He only who involuntarily reads the Meaning through the letter or expresses it by their means, he only who involuntarily proves his ascendancy in every particular case, has reached the goal. The fact that such a man has actually attained a higher level of Being is proved by the influence of all intrinsically profound personalities, even where they are still far from having reached the ideal advocated here. In reality they need say or do nothing, they need not even be understood in order to work creative effects. The great physician of souls heals and quiets by his mere presence; the silent presence of a great man effects more than the most profound conversation of another. In the same sense the enhancing rhythm of a leader is directly transferred. The same fact provides the explanation for the experience that in the case of lectures the level of the speaker as such works most strongly. If he *is* somebody, neither what he says nor whether he is understood is of any great importance; if only he does not descend from his own level, he raises the audience to his, and the inmost impulse of his Being calls out something akin to it in the audience, whether it be aware of it or not. The same is expressed by the fact that in the long run men in history work the effects exactly corresponding to their Being. Therefore, there is nothing extraordinary in the fact that the Emperor Shun only needed to sit there with his face turned to the south—and there was perfect harmony on earth: his mere existence was his most important activity. For once the complete organization of man from the surface down to the profoundest depth of Spirit is achieved, Spirit works directly; since the surface necessarily depends

upon the latter, Spirit no longer requires the voluntary agency of formations which are in tune with it. Then Significance radiates so powerfully into the phenomena, that they automatically adjust themselves to it, just as the world has naturally continued to develop according to God's first few words. Therefore, the fact that he who has reached the goal need no longer act purposely has this supremely positive significance, *that the profoundest within him works in a direct way*. In another connexion we learnt that in correlation to the deepening of consciousness ever profounder layers of the mental and psychic organism come to be automatons. A little while ago we touched upon a further illustration of the same relationship: in the case of psycho-therapeutic treatment the right suggestion is so supremely important because the unconscious inevitably accomplishes what it has once accepted. The unconscious always knows how to find the way to realize an intention provided the superliminal consciousness had grasped and shaped it clearly enough and in an adjustment corresponding to the Meaning proper of the object. Now the deeper the centre of consciousness of a man—which is at the same time organically connected with the surface—the wider the range of phenomena his immediate influence affects. It may ultimately rule the unconscious of a whole nation. This is the meaning of the legend of the Emperor Shun.

NOW it should be altogether clear how far world-ascendancy is possible not only theoretically, but practically as well. It is far less difficult to realize in the external world than is generally supposed, because it requires no kind of direct external power. The wish to be externally superior to the world is contrary to

Sense: upon the worldly plane, mass only preponderates over mass. But since Significance does not belong to the sphere of Nature and yet represents the primary principle, Significance—which is not extensive—virtually rules the cosmos. When God created the world, He did not set masses as such in motion; probably He did not even will anything, for will is closely interrelated with physical processes—He only just imagined a new Sense-connexion within the framework of space and time and then it realized itself spontaneously. Therefore, a growing ascendancy means in principle the increasing capacity to set aside the idea of material realization, which now takes place by itself. A setting aside not in the sense of the Hindoo denier of the world but, on the contrary, in the sense that perfect world-acceptance takes place from the height of a supermundane vantage. World-ascendancy does indeed imply perfect world-acceptance; for to him who possesses it the world of creation has become an alphabet which he masters from the basis of Significance and by means of which he says only what he himself pleases to say. Who would wish to take sides with respect to this or that letter from the standpoint of Significance? Who would think of rejecting one which, if rightly applied, enhances the possibility of Expression. The truly profound man need deny no kind of surface, for, viewed from his standpoint, all phenomena are equally profound. Nor can he any longer be one-sided in any sense; for he represents as it were the integral of all the differentials of Humanity. All differentiations with their fixed one-sidednesses are conditioned by an inferior level. Very many of the problems about which learned specialists write bulky volumes can only be posited because their authors fail to see what



really matters in the vital sense. Surely anyone may posit his problems at his own sweet will, and will even get correspondingly correct answers in every case—only these answers are superfluous as soon as they represent reality in a distorted light; and this is the case wherever a subordinate matter is made the chief consideration. Professional limits are necessary in practice; but in reality they do not exist; their only *raison d'être* lies in the impossibility to condense an all-sided connexion in any other but a one-sided way with regard to a certain point of view.

Now the higher this vantage, the greater the congruency between the proportions of the picture visualized and the real connexion, the less limited and distorted the prospects which open up; therefore, already the truly great scientist is beyond the sphere of the regular specialist. And this must be all the more true of every great *man*. That this is actually so is proved conclusively by the one fact of experience, that a man is, or might be, capable of a greater variety of things in proportion to his inward superiority, and that the highest type of man, that of the ruler, is fundamentally and necessarily superior to all specialization. But his proficiency in many things does not mean versatility in the sense of dilettantism, it means that he lives out of a greater depth: the profounder a man, the greater the number of gifts he can voluntarily use as a means of personal expression, for the greater the amount of things he can as a matter of course take in at a glance from within. The hitherto normal state of mankind is best typified by the Hindoo caste-order: according to it a man can only be *either* a Brahman, *or* a warrior, *or* a tradesman, *or* a peasant. But this "either-or" is obviously only the result of inward

tiedness; thus, according to Hindoo notions the man who has become knowing has by this very fact grown beyond the bounds of caste. Whoever has taken vital root in Significance is no longer bound to any type of expression; therefore, he can typify himself as he pleases according to the situation, provided he possesses the corresponding talents. For him the formations develop *ad hoc*, as the pseudopodia develop with the amoeba; he is as little inwardly bound to any definite formation, as the truly great spirit to any special profession.

For the deepening of a man at the same time implies his integration. Whatever is differentiated and far apart at the material surface, converges in the realm of Significance. On the plane of the former there will always be professions and castes, whatever reforms one may please to decree. But they cease to exist of their own accord wherever a man inwardly rises above them. And that alone matters. As many as possible should reach the state where they have grown inwardly beyond all tiedness; ultimately, machines should everywhere do all specialized and professional work. But until that state is reached, all must attune themselves to him who is truly superior. In his person human Being experiences nothing more nor less than a *shift of level*. This is the one thing needful, for progress is only possible to the inside. What used to be a last resort can no longer represent one for him who has gained world-ascendancy.

Thus the highest man we can imagine would be both nearest to and farthest from the earth. For him there would exist no degrees of superficiality and depth, for all phenomena would appear equally profound to him; there would be no higher or inferior values with regard to the external; there would be nothing that would be

necessarily separated, for in his eyes all things would be interdependent and as one. He would personally achieve the necessary synthesis between Being and Ability, between Essence and the phenomena, between Meaning and Expression; he would possess perfect understanding of Significance and would at the same time be a perfect *Realpolitiker*; at every moment the eternal and the temporal would coincide within him. And it would coincide through the core of his personality. We must look more closely into this last circumstance. The fact is that it means the most decisive of differences, whether personality or something alien expresses itself through the empiric. In the latter case it is a question of a medium, in the former of a master; and he alone embodies the ideal. Contrary to general opinion, the overwhelming majority of people are mediums, for, apart from exceptional cases, the integrated Self speaks only out of a very few. All artists are mediums, so are men with social tendencies, for their person for the most part represents some social abstraction. Most scientists are mediums in the wider sense of the word, as well as most intellectuals with regard to their system and program. And absolutely all human beings are mediums with respect to the *Zeitgeist* and public opinion. What is generally called a medium is nothing but the rare variety of this most frequent species, through whose organism forces manifest themselves which cannot express themselves through its consciously determinant person and are not connected with it. Now the medium never is a higher kind of person, no matter what expresses itself through it; the message or the work it serves to transmit makes a person no greater than a telephone becomes greater when it is used by a great man. The importance

of a man depends entirely and absolutely on the dimension or the range of the Reality which expresses itself through the centre of his individuality. In all ages there may have been mediums behind which higher powers were at work; but progress must be measured by the extent to which those powers become active within conscious man and through his personality. Therefore our task is not to found our home in other worlds, but to establish an unbroken connexion between these worlds and our own sphere; that is *to conquer mediumship*. The goal is not the *ἔκστασις* (ecstasy), not to leave the sphere determined by Spirit, but to inspire it with the Divine.

**I**N CONCLUSION let us link up the last trend of thought with the historic and political ideas on which this cycle rests. World-ascendancy as here described can become permanently effective today as opposed to the entire course of history up to now, because henceforth its Significance can be understood. The Logos is the principle of transferableness. There have been great spirits and men in all ages, but their influence has not been approximately what it might have been, because there existed no possibility of transferring the impulse they embodied to the determinant consciousness. That this possibility exists today is proved by the mere inventory of public opinion. The days of blindly accepted dogmata, of recognized authority, are past. Already personal understanding and voluntary action are the only means which lead *Realpolitik* to enduring success. Even today government must—if only in words—adapt itself to the corresponding higher ideals, even though the actual state of the majority is not equal to

them, because to disregard or oppose them demonstrably leads to catastrophes. However, that new and profounder Significance to which Life must henceforth be related, if it is to blossom out afresh, does not appear positively and clearly understood anywhere. Its representatives have not yet become the symbol of the true striving of all; and that must happen if possible progress is to become actual progress; for the latter never consists in the fact that all men progress at the same time, but that all attune themselves to deeper basic tones than hitherto. An age is only ripe for progress when pristine errors have been organically worked out, so that a new psychic state has come to life; hence the fact that, to begin with, recognized mistakes are replaced by opposite mistakes; hence that other fact, that what is really true to Sense always finds a late consolidation.

The earliest embodiment of the relationship between Meaning and Expression correctly understood is represented by the Hindoo doctrine of Dharma; the highest degree of inward freedom hitherto realized has in all likelihood been reached by the Taoist sages of China. We, in our own Occidental way, have today progressed as far as the profoundest Hindoos and Chinese. But with us it is a question of a historical and not an individual achievement. First the mediæval caste-order, the rule of dogma, was thrown off. It was succeeded by the rule of individualistic philosophy. That, too, is done for. At present all are living in an age of relativism—the understanding that no formation as such embodies an absolute value has unconsciously become universal. However, relativism is no possible last resort; as such, relativism is superficial; which is proved clearly enough by the fruits it bears. Surely there is such a thing as an



Absolute; and if the dogmata which once served as its symbols for consciousness are dead, this means no more than the death of mortal bodies. Their vital principle, disembodied for the time being, is the Significance which creates and supports them. As far as we can seize it, Significance represents the Absolute. Obviously the next historical task is to take root directly in it and to form character on its plane. Hitherto one knew of character only on the plane of the phenomena; character of this kind is always one-sided, limited and rigid. The opposite to this, the relativist as a type always lacks character. Yet, in principle, nothing obstructs the possibility of having character in spite of all relativism with regard to the phenomena; this can be achieved by taking root directly in Significance. This was the secret of those very great rulers we spoke of before; they lived practically beyond name or form. This is the reason of the immortality and the unceasing influence of the truly great spirits. Now the rare great ones are always the precursors of a possible general level; this is what makes them all-humanly significant. What once Prometheus alone could do is done today by the meanest manufacturer of matches; what the Greeks felt as the mystery of Nature is comprehended by any average modern school-boy; some books of occult teaching extol qualities of the master which every educated man in most progressive nations possesses as a matter of course. The general level of culture is measured by the amount and degree of knowledge which is a matter of course (knowledge understood here, of course, in the sense of one which has become flesh, which is vital and not abstract; one should call to mind my observations on the importance of old culture). This self-evidence in its turn is a result of a

universal higher development of the organs of understanding. Now the present-day general degree of development among the most advanced nations is such that henceforth the man who has gained world-ascendancy can be *determinant*.

This is of immeasurable importance. The progress possible today is far, far greater than any progress history has known of up to now. It is far greater than the progress effected by Christ's influence up to the present. His influence has not yet been able to achieve much, because it was not understood, and only that which has been understood can be transferred. Thus Christ's teaching only led to the establishment of a filiation of limited churches; and the first and chief task precisely of the Christ-impulse of our age is to break their bonds. In many respects Nietzsche was more truly a disciple of Christ than any pope. And what happened to Jesus has happened to all who possessed Sense-understanding. Buddha was made a god of a Church; to Lao-tse a highly questionable magic system refers as its supreme authority. And as to politics, Bismarck's superiority, as it was grasped by the literal mind, has led to a kind of *Realpolitik* which could not but ruin Germany. Similar errors need never happen again. Thus the true epoch both of Christ and of Buddha sets in only today. Thus, it is only today that the true history of mankind is beginning. And it has begun. Most people may not be aware of it. But even Heaven does not appear with "great show." Viewed externally, great renewals never mean destruction, but fulfilment. For what is it that should change externally? If now the new era of true freedom is setting in, this has nothing to do with the realization of any kind of program

for the promotion of universal happiness. External freedom means either a utopian dream or else hypocrisy; that man alone is free, always and under all circumstances, who inwardly stands above the bondage of Nature. These bonds are as necessary as the laws of language, of poetry, of musical harmony. Surely a more limited kind of bond can make room for a better one, just as the vehicle drawn by oxen as a conveyance has been replaced by trains and airplanes. Nature in the widest sense of the word should and will be made an increasingly obedient means of expression. Thus even today the time is near at hand when all knowledge which can be imparted by scientific research will belong to the sphere of self-evident premises, so that there will no longer be a question of stating incorrect dates and advancing inadequate theories or of taking other kinds of external measures than are in accordance with the standards of absolute truth to Significance and purpose. But once we have reached that point, there will be as little discussion about scientific problems as a whole, their so-called occult branches included, as today we discuss the problem of the multiplication table. The fact that science until a very short time ago enjoyed almost the prestige of Wisdom, proves how purely grammatical the epoch was which is now dying: its one thought was the specific meaning of the languages; and it had no idea that the most important, in fact the only real task is to *say* something by means of whatever language one may know. Hence the materialism and mechanism of those days; hence the low level of metaphysics and religion.

From now on scientific truth will be a matter of course on all planes. Accordingly, mankind will think solely

of what Meaning should be realized by means of the fully mastered Expression. Then, too, the question of external renewal will be of no more fundamental interest, for no possible idealism nourished from metaphysical sources would any longer be connected with it; it would then be a fact universally recognized that the majority of the fundamental forms of Life tested by experience must be accepted as they are, just as the alphabet of Nature must be accepted as such; whereas all renewal without a single exception which results from profounder Sense-perception has to be realized from a point of view as strictly objective as the improvement of a technical invention. The laws of grammar must needs be observed under all circumstances, no matter what one says. But henceforth something better than ever before can be said: this is the salient point. The true history of mankind *has* already begun, because this is possible even today.

Now let us recall and survey at a glance the whole of our trains of thought concerning the relationship between Being and Ability, Surface and Depth, Meaning and Expression: indeed, the rule of world-ascendancy would mean nothing more or less than that the *totality* of Life would henceforth be related to a profounder centre of Significance. This, however, would involve an unheard-of vitalization. We saw that all life means a perpetual process of vitalization, and that vitalization is all the greater, the deeper the centre of Significance to which it is consciously related. Our age makes an unvital and mechanical impression, its love of life easily reverts to the longing for death, because it does not see its own meaning; on the other hand, religious epochs are inspired by the greatest vitality because they are nourished



by the wellspring of Life—one cannot relate back one's life to anything more profound than God. Thus, what is becoming possible today is something unheard of: our existence can be related back to an equally profound centre of Meaning as in the case of the greatest religious epochs, *only this time through the spirit possessed of conscious understanding*. That would mean the first decisive step beyond Christ. He related man's Being and life to a deeper basic note than had ever before been struck in the West. But practically only a part of it was brought into that relationship; hence the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, belief and knowledge, spirit and soul; a distinction which had to grow more sharp and rigid with growing differentiation and resulted in a compensatory superficiality of those parts which were not included in the deepening process. And above all, the primal creative power as it was expressed by Christ remained centred outside of self-consciousness, in spite of Christ's teaching that the Kingdom of Heaven lies within us; for this teaching has not yet taken historic effect; thus the position of self-consciousness towards God became an eccentric one. That it was so for a time was a good thing: thus only could that tension between the ideal and reality develop, which means the real *raison d'être* of our Western capacity for progress. Man had first to be severed from the concentricity of the typical Eastern adjustment in which man feels a harmonious part of the universe once and for all; for only thus was it possible to overcome the dependence on Nature; this fall, too, had to be. But that eccentricity of consciousness which prevailed during the last two centuries can only have a meaning when understood as the dissonance stimulating expectation



before the striking of the chord. The new higher harmony is now the goal. If that goal were reached, then the primal creative power, which hitherto worked from the outside and was accessible only to the surrendering unconscious, would be centred in consciousness itself. From being a dead and deadly instrument, the conscious would become an immediate expression of that same primary creative power. Nothing would be any longer excluded from its participation; no particular meaning would maintain an eccentric position; no individual activity would work in the wrong direction. Religion would no longer rule a specialized sphere of its own, philosophy would not mean one discipline among others, politics no independent technique: *one single* vital spiritual body would embrace everything—a body organized and articulated, true to Sense, from the depths to the outer skin. Conscious Spirit, however, grown to be one with the world-creating Eros, would rule supreme, never more restricted by external things, never more led into error. What formerly characterized the mage alone would henceforth be the normal state of man. The alphabet of the world would express Sense-connexions which in previous ages could never become determinant on earth. Hardly one of the problems troubling us now would then be posited. Instead, a door would open upon a vista of new problems, never even imagined in earlier days. For just as cosmic space has no imaginable outer limits, just so there are no limits, in the inward direction, to possible depths of Significance.



## THIRD CYCLE



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## I. *Our Will*

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AT THE time when the assembly met in the rooms of the School of Wisdom at Darmstadt for the purpose of founding the Society for Free Philosophy, I set forth in the most general outlines the meaning, the particular adjustment and the goal of the newly created spiritual centre. But those explanations were more an exposition of the possibility than of the fact. The trial of experience was still entirely lacking; and although that which was to be effected steadily directed my thoughts and actions from within, I had as yet no clear idea, in many respects, of its specific character. In the meanwhile, the number of those who have attended the School of Wisdom has been unexpectedly great. Questions called forth the corresponding answers, demands called forth fulfilments, and experience, practical measures. Thus the general Significance has by now in many respects found the way to the only expression corresponding to it, and not to the least extent by means of the formation of my Self. It is literally true that man grows with his work in so far as it represents a true expression of his inner Being. From the epistemological point of view, the so-called inner and the so-called outer world differ only technically; they harbour different kinds of phenomena, but they stand in the same relationship of distance to the metaphysical Self. Therefore the work of a creative man belongs to him as intimately as do his spirit and his body. Only by



works created in the external world does such a man realize himself; his personal meaning becomes real only in the objectified expression. In the case of men of action of the extreme type this goes so far that, before entering upon their particular sphere of action, a Cromwell, a Napoleon, a Bismarck literally lacked many of the traits most characteristic of them later—for a sharp distinction must be made between original disposition and actual qualities. Now I am certainly not a man of action. But my case resembles that of such men in so far as the qualities I need for my practical activities have only begun to develop since I am working on their lines; with me repugnance formerly played the same *rôle* as want of opportunity in the case of the statesman. By nature I am a solitary and an artist. I lack all personal urge for external activity; I never felt the need of intercourse with my fellow men, nor did I ever have the wish to convince others of the truths I progressively recognized. On another occasion I have already told you how the foundation of the School of Wisdom came about as an act of duty, as it were. My superliminal consciousness was so little prepared for the new task that no essay ever came so reluctantly to my pen as "The New Union between Mind and Soul." During the first terms at Darmstadt I had to do constant violence to my nature. But it was only my superliminal consciousness that resisted: this was unmistakably proved by the inner growth manifesting itself with increasing strength, the more I gave myself up to my activities. Thus I am experiencing within myself how the original discrepancy between the empiric and the metaphysical will—that is between will and destiny, and in the supreme case between personal and Divine will—progressively turns into con-

gruency. Personal inclination or disinclination plays an increasingly insignificant part with me, because its concept becomes increasingly devoid of contents. But at the same time the difference between the external and the internal is disappearing more and more; much of what outwardly gives the impression of personal intention is "happening" to me now. The fact is, I have grown into my work. Therefore, today I can speak more concretely about it than I could at the time when I saw it before me only as a projected possibility. Thus in this cycle I shall not really deal with the intents, the way and the goal of the School of Wisdom for the second time—in truth I am doing so for the very first time.

I SHALL begin by positing a general question, the right answer to which at the same time includes the answer to the particular question as to our specific intent—the problem on what the true, the essential progress of mankind rests. The overwhelming majority are of the opinion that it rests upon new *contents* of knowledge and their practical application. As soon as new facts are discovered or set into the world, new ideas are found, new programs are put forth and brought nearer to their realization from without by corresponding institutions, it is thought that we have progressed in the essential sense. Yet, if we think of the fact that this greatest epoch of innovations on the plane of "things" that ever existed has ended in an unparalleled breakdown, in which Western humanity, in spite of its undoubtedly great external progress, has proved more barbaric, more superficial and inwardly void than possibly any other ever did before, we are fully justified in doubting whether external progress has anything to do

with inner progress. One who offers something new in the sense of things need apparently not be a renewer of mankind. But if at this point we consider those men who have demonstrably induced essential progress, we shall find that the reverse of the preceding sentence, too, is true: a real renewer need not offer anything new. In the case of all the truly great, without a single exception, the surrounding world and immediate posterity wonderingly put the question, what new thing he had brought. And in every case, again without a single exception, the most frequent answer was a negative. This answer was, moreover, expressly confirmed by many of the great themselves. Again and again, Socrates affirmed that he had no particular doctrine to impart; that he only wanted to play the *rôle* of a spiritual midwife. Jesus declared that He had not come to destroy the law; He, too, protested against the idea of His bringing new contents. And, indeed, not one of His teachings was unheard of; in His day there was a profusion of sects and schools all over Syria, which stood for doctrines which were at least very similar to His ideas. St. Francis of Assisi, the great reformer of the Middle Ages, was one of the poor in spirit; nothing original can be traced to him, and he himself went so far in his hostility to all originality, that he subjected his judgment not only to the authority of the Church, but even to that of any ordained priest. Luther only wanted to re-establish Christianity in its original purity—Luther of all men, that volcanic revolutionary. As to Confucius, the true founder of Chinese culture, he prided himself most on the fact that he only created the synthesis of the old; he was an extreme traditionalist and almost morbidly averse to innovations.

In the case of many great men the intentions were different. Nevertheless, with all of them the character of originality recedes in proportion to their greatness. No scholar of the days of Buddha will have found anything unknown to him in the former's sermons. In the eyes of many of his contemporaries Plato was a plagiarist; Goethe was considered as a gifted but unoriginal spirit even by a Lessing. Now there is no denying that the men enumerated above have had a profounder influence, that they have done more essential deeds and induced greater progress than any innovators in the sense of substantial innovation; nay, than all the so-called "originals" of history combined. Hence the power which causes an acceleration of development, a change or a deepening of the soul-life, must rest upon something different from the novelty of the contents of knowledge. It does indeed. This is a fundamental truth. It is necessary now at last to understand it. And the quickest way to understand it is to consider more closely the truth I have again and again presented in my lectures and writings in one form or another, for this or that occasion, namely, that on the plane of Life, Significance creates the facts, and not *vice versa*. Therefore, no substantial innovation—which must necessarily be a matter of facts—can represent the last resort here. What is new in itself need not have the slightest Significance. As opposed to this, what was old can gain a new meaning by means of a new conception of it.

I HAVE often not only explained this to be so; I have also given instances proving it to be true. But what cannot be refuted need not, for that reason, be understood. Experience has shown that precisely this

fundamental insight of ours seems most difficult to understand, because superficial thinking cannot form any idea of Spirit as being something creative. But it will have to be finally understood. Therefore, I will this time show its truth in that domain of the empiric sphere in which modern intellect feels so much at home. For metaphysical truths, as far as they are truths at all, can be proved as valid everywhere because they concern Sense-connexions, and every empiric life-phenomenon has its Sense-side. Thus the treble of Significance must willy-nilly correspond to its basic tones; whoever profoundly understands a superficial part of Life, necessarily gains metaphysical insight along with it, for every particular Significance is organically connected with ultimate Significance. This is why the fundamental insight that Meaning creates the facts must be empirically demonstrable on some corresponding plane; and it must be quite unequivocally demonstrable, not only to the satisfaction of such as are themselves capable of Sense-perception. The sphere in question is that of modern analytical psychology.<sup>1</sup> Its theories, the validity of which has been proved by the enormous number of its practical successes, need only be more profoundly understood, in order to assert the very thing I stand for as a metaphysician.

Sigmund Freud was the first to apply to his patients the working hypothesis that every psychic fact—be it a case of habits, illnesses, anomalies—should be under-

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<sup>1</sup>In order to guard my critics against false constructions, I expressly state here that I first occupied myself with psycho-analysis and analytical psychology in the summer of 1921; that is to say, long after the insights this book represents had taken shape within me. Before that time I knew of it only by hearsay.



stood on the basis of its meaning for the individual; no movement, no dream, no unconscious action is without meaning; on the contrary, the meaning is the real *raison d'être* of the facts; and most disturbances of the inner equilibrium are caused—I am always restating Freud—by the fact that the consciousness of man has a mistaken idea of the true connexion. And lo and behold: in a continually increasing number of cases—in proportion to the development of his practical methods—Freud succeeded in effecting a cure or a change by revealing the meaning. Since then, hundreds of physicians and psychologists have independently of one another followed out the way first shown by Freud. Today, Freud's particular theory is only one among many contending theories; and I, for my part, must confess that as yet none appears to me to be altogether satisfactory, because the formulation of each and all lays the emphasis on the most inferior side in the vital whole of man—a thing not to be wondered at with doctors, since disease lowers every kind of level, for which reason they instinctively consider the most inferior as the only real thing—whereas spiritual problems reveal their profoundest essence only in their highest expression.

But it is not only the fundamental theory—which as far as I know nobody has as yet formulated explicitly—that has stood the test in every way; there is no doubt that steps have been taken in the direction of specialization and precise definition, which can be considered as a final progress beyond Freud. Whereas the latter only too often judged external behaviour as a symptom of mere animal instincts, by which he related human Being back to the animal to an unjustifiable extent, Alfred Adler has done greater justice to man's essential *Geistig-*

*keit* (spirituality, intellectuality). During the whole course of his practice as a physician he has found proofs of his theory, that what is primal in every individual are not the tangible facts of his Being, nor his unconscious animal instincts, but the spiritual direction or line of life, the inherent purposeful activity of which creates everything from within, from the traits of character to the course of destiny. In order to understand a neurosis or a psychosis—there is hardly a modern man entirely free of it—the first question which must be answered is this: what is the aim in life of the man in question; what is the idea he entertains of himself, the ideal he aspires to? All particulars ensue from this. Thus defects of memory, the distribution of the psychic contents upon the conscious and the unconscious, the ways in which a man frustrates his own conscious wishes, can in every case—always according to Adler—be rightly understood as purposeful measures, and can even be foretold. From this basis of understanding most disorders can be cured, and thus only.

But the step leading furthest toward the perception of the spiritual roots of human Being has been taken among the psychologists by C. G. Jung. It is true that his book, *Psychological Types*, is more of a chaos than of a cosmos; exuberantly rich in problems and perspectives as it is, it lacks clarity. Nevertheless, I think it epoch-making in the history of Mind. Jung's work represents the first monumental attempt to achieve in a scientific way a doctrine of the soul, the subject of which is not a representation of the single functions and parts of the soul, but its living synthesis. Now Jung has come to the conclusion that every empiric character—*i.e.*, every particular man—represents by his special character the

particular expression of a typical inner *adjustment*. According to Jung *this* is the primal thing within man; ultimately, the adjustment creates the psychological facts.

It is evident at first sight in what respect Jung's doctrine means a step beyond the one-sidedness of those of Freud and Adler, while at the same time it grasps the problem more deeply. It proceeds from the synthesis of impulses and spiritual aims, which actually represents the ultimate givenness of the psychic Being of man, and then relates it back to its ultimate imaginable spiritual roots. And these roots are represented precisely by the *adjustment* of the given synthesis—in the case of a connexion it is obviously essential—to what centre all the various parts are related, or, viewed from the other side, the way this centre is adjusted. Accordingly, Jung does not, like Freud, consider sexuality as the ultimate thing, but *the adjustment* of the whole psychic organism to sexuality; nor does he, like Adler, suppose it to be the will to self-assertion or to power, but the inner adjustment empirically expressed by the latter. And Jung's idea stands the pragmatic test in all fundamental respects, whatever elaboration, precision and elucidation it may yet require; and apart from the question, whether or not the specific doctrine of types elaborated by Jung represents the last word with regard to this problem. There can be no doubt that the adjustment of the whole psychic organism represents the primary fact of psychic life. Therefore, externally similar psychic phenomena mean something different, according to the type in which they are observed—*i.e.*, according to the inner adjustment to which they must be related back. What in one case means disease means health in another; what in the one is profound is superficial in the other; what is right in

the one is wrong in the other. And so on and so forth. The concrete particular case can only be understood on the basis of its spiritual meaning.—Have we not herewith returned from the empiric to our metaphysical insight, that in the domain of Life Significance creates the facts? It is true that you will not find the formulation I have given here in any psycho-analytical book. But the only reason is that the scientists in question had no reason to go more deeply into the matter than was absolutely indispensable for the purpose of the scientific comprehension of experience. I have simply related back their insights to the basic tone of Significance exactly corresponding to them, and this is the very tone which I myself am continually striking. Thus, metaphysical truth is mirrored in the empiric. If, in principle, the former is undemonstrable, the same truth can be directly demonstrated on the plane of experience. Now let us revert to our original setting of the problem with the concreter understanding we have gained. Why are substantial innovations of so little importance from the point of view of human progress? Because facts derive their vital significance exclusively from the spiritual connexion they are related to. And why is it that spirits which were unoriginal from the point of view of innovation have been able to change the world? The reason lies in the primacy of inner adjustment, which decides upon possible significance. If the adjustment in question has no profounder basis than any previous one, even the newest facts remain devoid of a renewing meaning for life. If the inner adjustment as such means a deepening, then even the oldest facts become endowed with a new Significance. And the latter is of such exclusive importance that the truly great in history were



hostile to originality precisely for this reason. From the theoretical point of view they need not have been so; but they were. Progress is possible exclusively in the inward direction. The one important thing is the Meaning manifesting itself by means of the letter. All this has long been known to us who seek for Wisdom. But today we have gained a new concept which will prove most fruitful for our particular aims: the concept of inner adjustment. The character and the degree of Sense-perception and Sense-realization depend upon the adjustment of the whole psychic organism of man. "Adjustment" represents the intermediary between the spiritual basis and manifested life.

IF EVERYTHING depends upon inner adjustment, we need no longer wonder at the superficiality and crudeness of our age: its achievements on the plane of facts do not better its inner adjustment, if this should be a mistaken one. We must now elucidate this state of things by a few instances; their comprehension will mean the shortest way towards an understanding of the particular aims of the School of Wisdom. For the longer I teach, the more I prefer concrete examples to abstract definition.—The second part of the nineteenth century confessed to the faith that exact science, and natural science in particular, are capable of solving all problems mankind is at all able to posit. As time went on, this faith has stood the test so badly that many leading spirits in our days are purposely inexact with regard to facts, that scientific conscience is everywhere losing its sensitiveness and youth is frequently on the verge of breaking with all science. In reality, the attitudes both of the nineteenth-century and the present-



day radicals are equally mistaken, and in exactly the same sense. Science must be considered as an absolutely positive value; nothing can replace it upon its own plane; it should be as exact as it can possibly be, nor should it make any concessions to metaphysics, religion and art; on these conditions it will doubtless one day lead to an exhaustive and exact concept of the world. *Only, no possible exact concept of the world can exhaust the world; this is the reason for the disappointment in science.* Science does not *mean* what its believers thought it to mean. Its possibility is the result of a definite adjustment, namely, the adjustment to the outside of things. It knows of nothing but phenomena connected by laws; whatever may lie outside or beyond this sphere, which was first correctly limited by Kant, does not exist for it.

The meaning of this limitation of science becomes clear the moment we define it by means of our accustomed conceptual co-ordinates: science deals exclusively with language, and not with what is said by its means; hence the entire realm of Significance escapes it, with the exception of the small province of the sense proper of the language itself. Thus the very way of putting the question which makes science possible, at the same time precludes the possibility of its being able to solve the problems belonging to the sphere of art, religion and philosophy. The science of the nineteenth century has overrated itself in exactly the same sense as religion did in the Middle Ages. The latter, too, was at one time thought to be able to answer all questions. The result in the Middle Ages was a general regression—measured by the standard of Antiquity—on all planes not belonging to the religious domain. In exactly the same way

the mistaken estimation of science in the nineteenth century caused a decline as compared to previous epochs on all lines not belonging to science. Yet, obviously both kinds of decline might have been avoided if the *Meaning* of science and religion had been recognized in time. For wherever man has understood, subjection to the power of Destiny turns into determination of Destiny.

And now let us turn to another instance of the importance of inner adjustment, which means a still closer approach to the understanding of our particular goal. It is provided by the theosophical movement. Let us assume that all the new facts the existence of which occultism asserts, are correctly stated; in this case occultism would enrich knowledge by more new facts than any kind of research ever did before. But the question whether or not it induces progress by their means does not depend upon this, but on its *adjustment* to the new facts. No movement can be based upon facts as such; in this connexion reincarnation means no more than the multiplication table. If the assertions of the theosophists concerning facts are true, they will soon be acknowledged as naturally as the truth that the earth turns round the sun, and all possible movements will agree to that extent. But a movement is exclusively characterized by the light in which it sees and the way it uses the facts; this inner adjustment alone gives it its special quality and meaning. I will deal here in particular with the variety of theosophy represented by the late Rudolf Steiner, because his example is the most instructive. The inner adjustment of Steiner's anthroposophy is the most unfortunate imaginable: it repre-

sents the junction of two adjustments which have been proved to be mistaken and which are historically obsolete. The one is that of the scientific era just past, with which we have already dealt. Personally, Rudolf Steiner represented it in every way. Whatever he may have asserted, for him existed none but scientific problems; for even the "visualizing" in Goethe's sense, the further development of which he aimed at, leads to phenomenological and not to metaphysical insight, to say nothing of self-realization. This is why Steiner noticed only what may be called the external view or the outside of the spiritual, and why he lacked all understanding of Significance. For this very reason it is only natural that he should have expected the new information he imparted to effect regeneration. In spite of his considerable philosophical endowments, Steiner had no other relationship to metaphysics and religion than any typical natural scientist of the eighteen-nineties; for here it is a question of inner adjustment. Therefore, if science cannot effect any inner renewal, the same is also true of theosophy.

Now at this point Steiner's second mistake sets in, aggravating the unfortunate state of things already described. Only a very few know of the new facts by personal experience. The others are taught to trust their leaders and, for the rest, to "think out" their statements—this would be their way to draw nearer the truth. Now quite apart from the question whether the revelations of Steiner are true, and no matter whether the pondering of another's visions may really develop the spiritual organs in the long run, this kind of practice *necessarily* leads to the rebirth of the mentality of

the late Middle Ages; of the mentality which was defined by the two co-ordinates of belief in revelation and scholastic thinking. Thus a retrogression of the spiritual personality in the direction of dependence takes place. As far as we are justified in ascertaining a progress from the days of the Middle Ages down to modernity, it rests entirely upon the developing independence of the individual; it is for this that all the successive centuries since the Renaissance and the days of the Reformation have fought. As opposed to this, it is typical for the theosophical impulse that, whatever it may intend, it changes all those whom it influences back into scholasticists, who are made no better by the fact that, over and above that, their particular kind is burdened with the inheritance of scientific materialism; this impulse *must needs* act that way, because it is the result of a mistaken inner adjustment which gives the facts their meaning and the personality its character. Physiologically, the theosophist is a believer in dogmata; his centre of consciousness does not lie within his free creative Self; the greater his talents, the more scholastic the quality of his thinking, the more Jesuitical the impression made by his actions. Therefore to repeat: theosophy may impart ever so many new truths; as a *movement* it can lead to no good. Or, to use a milder expression, it can work good effects only in so far as it may historically represent a necessary stage of transition<sup>1</sup> which as such will lead beyond itself.

But now let us oppose to the unfavorable influence of Rudolf Steiner the incredibly enhancing influence of another life—an influence which is rarely understood,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Philosophie als Kunst*, p. 242ff.

because it rests upon no new spiritual contents: I mean that of Rabindranath Tagore. During his stay in Germany one paper after another commented upon the fact of his having said so little that was new. How should he? Tagore is profound; and in all ages the truly profound have taught fundamentally the same. Even if God the Father were suddenly to appear in our midst, He would hardly tell us anything so new as to satisfy our phrasemongers; in all probability He would merely repeat the teachings of the Bible. . . . The influence of Tagore does not rest upon his intellect, which is not exceptional, nor on his value as a poet, which can be disputed; it rests entirely and exclusively upon his depth. And this means: the old and well-known spiritual contents, which as such any indifferent scribbler can restate in the daily press, *mean* something else and something new, when uttered by Rabindranath Tagore. In his case they express Sense-connexions which, as a rule, do not manifest themselves within the phenomenal world. No one progresses essentially by mere increase of information, for such increase need not effect anything vital within him. But when a man has a religious experience, when a metaphysical insight flashes up within his personal consciousness—then a true miracle happens; a new spiritual reality reveals itself through what was long known as a fact, just as love gives a new meaning to Life, transfiguring the workaday world. Such a miracle happened to those who opened up their souls to the influence of the great Hindoo at Darmstadt in the summer of 1921. Through him they actually experienced the same as though they had personally gained profounder insight, for the separation between human



beings is only a thing of the material surface; all souls are interconnected; the exemplars and the leaders are such only because for the led they play the same part that inspiration plays in the case of personal creativeness. Thanks to Tagore, many for the first time understood the old truths—*i.e.*, they experienced the necessary vitalization from within. But by becoming thus intelligible for the first time, these truths seemed new.

Herewith we have reached the *essential* concept of novelty, and it is this alone which relates “novelty” to the idea of “renewal.” Every new-born human being is something absolutely new, no matter whom he resembles. Every emotion experienced, every truth vitally perceived, nay, any life personally lived begins anew at every moment; for without a continual vitalization from the depths not belonging to the realm of phenomena, it could not continue. *Thus vitalization creates true originality.* Can you now understand why Tagore meant so much to us? In the very sense explained here, he has told those who surrendered to him nothing well known, but, on the contrary, something altogether new. Since in his case other spiritual realities than usually influence events spoke through the old teachings, his listeners understood through him what no sacred letter ever told them.

Thus, what is essentially novel—and this is identical with what is essentially renewing—never lies on the plane of facts, but exclusively on that of Significance. It follows that it is not the “What” of a thought that decides, but the “Who” of the man who utters it; because this “Who” determines the Sense-connexion forming the background of his Being. And it follows, more-

over, that the *level* of the personality ultimately creates the Meaning.

“LEVEL” is the word, qualified with regard to value of depth, for “inner adjustment.” In the preceding considerations the decisive importance of level has often been dealt with. Today, in connexion with the more concrete concept of inner adjustment, the last misunderstandings should be overcome. The question of level is absolutely prior to the question of all values which can be defined in the abstract, because the latter always presuppose the existence of a Sense-connexion, the centre of relationship of which they symbolize; therefore they can never mean last resorts. Good, evil, true, false, real, unreal, etc., mean different qualities in each case, according to the level in question. *Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi; si duo faciunt idem, non est idem*—these oldest of insights can now be amplified in the sense that only a higher level of Being can put into the world what is more significant, because more profound. A higher level of Being alone creates the fixed centre of relationship which preserves the intended meaning of the concepts and words; wherever that centre is lacking, the first concrete misunderstanding gives the abstract greatness of the words the lie.

Now think back from this point to the teachings of Adler and Jung. Adler shows that the facts of life derive from spiritual aims and intents, and not *vice versa*; Jung, that the original adjustment of the whole psychic organism creates the psychic facts: the same teachings, profoundly grasped, help us to understand fully why men like Buddha, Confucius, Christ, who were no originals in the superficial sense, have worked

the effects of renewers—and at the same time why the greatness of such as they were is hardly ever grasped by intellectualists, before the prestige of fame has shifted the plane of discussion. On the plane of facts, the only comprehensible one for intellectualists, there really is “nothing extraordinary” about their teachings. Buddha’s in particular sounds almost trivial; put forth by a man of little intelligence, or merely *in abstracto*, the doctrine of suffering even gives the impression of one of the least interesting of all doctrines. Yet when one reads Buddha’s sermons in the original, or in the German translation of Karl Eugen Neumann, which is almost as good as the former, one completely forgets that Buddha’s teaching and current Buddhism are substantially the same: one feels directly touched by a gigantic personality, speaking from out of the ultimate depth of understanding and using the definable doctrine almost as an indifferent means of expression. In a lesser degree this is true wherever a living man speaks. If you compare the living word of such a man with the most careful shorthand report, it will in most cases not contain precisely what the lecturer gave you personally. Under all circumstances, the true effect of a man rests upon the magic of personality; and if it acts through his writing, this means that the latter expresses more than its traceable letter contains.<sup>1</sup> In the highest of cases the magic

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<sup>1</sup> Bergson illustrates one aspect of these facts in a wonderful way in his collection of essays, *L'énergie spirituelle* (p. 48): “Laissez de côté les reconstructions artificielles de la pensée, considérez la pensée même; vous y trouverez moins des états que des directions, et vous verrez qu'elle est essentiellement un changement continu et continu de direction intérieure, lequel tend sans cesse à se traduire par des changements de direction extérieure, je veux dire par des actions, et des gestes capables de dessiner dans l'espace et d'exprimer métaphoriquement, en quelque sorte, les allées et venues de l'esprit. De ces mouve-

of personality works independently of the wording. This is true of the words of Christ which He is quite certain not to have spoken in the way they are transmitted to us, since He spoke Aramean and their Greek rendering is not perfect. Nevertheless, His words have proved to be magic forces of cosmic dimensions. This can be due only to the fact that His depth was so great and His transparency so absolute, that even the externally "indifferent means of expression" are for ever inspired by His depth, as their wellspring of Life. But it is fortunate that we have just returned to the figure of Christ: on what does the progress He initiated rest? We have already seen that it does not rest upon substantial novelty. It rests upon the fact that through the example of Christ

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ments esquissés, ou même simplement préparés, nous ne nous apercevons pas, le plus souvent, parceque nous n'avons aucun intérêt à les connaître; mais force nous est bien de les remarquer quand nous serrons de près notre pensée pour la saisir toute vivante et pour la faire passer, vivante encore, dans l'âme d'autrui. Les mots auront beau alors être choisis comme il faut, ils ne diront pas ce que nous voulons leur faire dire si le rythme, la ponctuation et toute la chorégraphie du discours ne les aident pas à obtenir du lecteur, guidé alors par une série de mouvements naissants, qu'il décrive une courbe de pensées et de sentiments analogue à celle que nous décrivons nous-mêmes. Tout l'art d'écrire est là. C'est quelque chose comme l'art du musicien; mais ne croyez pas que la musique dont il s'agit s'adresse simplement à l'oreille comme on se l' imagine d'ordinaire. Une oreille étrangère, si habituée qu'elle puisse être à la musique, ne fera pas de différence entre la phrase française que nous trouvons musicale et celle qui ne l'est pas, entre ce qui est parfaitement écrit en français et ce qui ne l'est qu'approximativement: preuve évidente qu'il s'agit de tout autre chose que d'une harmonie matérielle des sons. En réalité, l'art de l'écrivain consiste surtout à nous faire oublier qu'il emploie des mots. L'harmonie qu'il cherche est une certaine correspondance entre les allées et venues de son esprit et celles de son discours, correspondance si parfaite que, portées par la phrase, les ondulations de sa pensée se communiquent à la notre et qu'alors chacun des mots, pris individuellement, ne compte plus: il n'y a plus rien que le sens mouvant qui travers les mots, plus rien que deux esprits, qui semblent vibrer directement, sans intermédiaire, à l'unisson l'un de l'autre. Le rythme de la parole n'a donc d'autre objet que de reproduire le rythme de la pensée."

a new inner adjustment to God, man and the world became determinant in history, an adjustment which is more deeply rooted in Significance than that of the entire pagan world and corresponds to a level unheard of till then within the cultural sphere of the Mediterranean. It is quite true that the word became flesh in Christ: whatever before Him was at best externalized knowledge became a vital power in and with Him.

THIS general introduction leads directly to the understanding of what the School of Wisdom aims at. In the School of Wisdom, that which the introduction elucidated in a theoretical way finds its practical application. We are often reproached with the fact that we stand for nothing substantially new. But we have no such intention. We have disciples from every imaginable camp. Their first question is generally this: whether a man adhering to this or that religious view, to this or that philosophical system, to this or that political program, is welcome in our midst. And the first answer they get, often to their utter bewilderment, is that in the first instance we are indifferent to all opinions, ideas and views—that is, to what is most important from the point of view of the intellectualist. The only thing that matters to us is what the views *mean* in each individual case. For us, all intellectual formations we light upon as well as every given empiric character only mean raw material. The objective value of the empiric is of no importance to us; considered from our point of view, it belongs to the sphere of grammar. The only thing we pay attention to is the depth of Significance to which the empiric corresponds or can correspond in each particular case; for that alone is important for essential



progress. Accordingly, we refuse to receive anyone in the School of Wisdom who seeks for something else than that. Whoever aspires to more extensive information is referred to the university; whoever seeks for faith is referred to some church, or theosophy, as the case may be; whoever wishes to be active in politics, to the organization of the party in question. And even here we do not inquire into the objective value of the institutions in question, but solely to what extent they correspond to the nature of the individual. A politician who had come to the conclusion that my standing above all parties and factions was the right thing to do, wanted accordingly to retire from his party in which he occupied a prominent position. I dissuaded him from doing so precisely from my own standpoint: the greater the number of profound men within the existing organizations, the better; and this applies to each and all, without a single exception. In the same sense, the most varied views and confessions obtain a hearing at the sessions of the School of Wisdom. Yet nobody who ever attended one will have taken home the impression of a vague eclecticism. *What the School of Wisdom stands for is a new inner adjustment to every kind of intellectual content.* It is the first of all institutions in history which *consciously* lays the emphasis on that which in all ages, from the dawn of history, has induced and stood for inner progress. Significance as the creator of all facts; inner adjustment as the measure of the depth and correctness of Sense-perception; and Level as the ultimately decisive value.

Now I need only revert to theoretical insights known to you from previous chapters, and to interpret them for practical use, in order to give an exhaustive and pre-

cise definition of the intents of the School of Wisdom. But in order to establish a comprehensible connexion between what I have said up to now and the following, I will prove once more, and this time on a purely abstract plane, the truth of the sentence that a thought means something different according to the person who utters it. On what does the importance of Kant rest?—It is impossible to deduce his doctrine from its differentiated contents and particular statements which, for the most part, he took over from the stores of human knowledge. On the other hand, his doctrine necessarily results as a single piece from his *way of positing the problem*. This is so strongly the case because of the perfect and complete organization of Kant's thought-structure, that the following paradox might be maintained: even a stranger, provided he understood Kant's way of positing the problem so fully that he had become capable of involuntarily thinking from its basis, would have been able to write the *Critiques*, as we know them. Kant put the question: supposing the existence of experience, how is it possible? Supposing science imparts valid recognitions, how is this to be understood without prejudice? Viewed from the particular angle thus created, even the otherwise best-known truths and facts appear to be new, for they are now drawn into a Sense-connexion, thanks to which they *mean* something new. But this connexion cannot in any way be ascertained upon the plane of the letter; with reference to this it represents an *a priori*. He only, who would grasp Kant's way of positing the problem immediately as such, is capable of seeing the world *à la* Kant.

Now does this imply that Kant has subjectified the world? It would, if he had posited the problems in

the wrong way. But he has posited them correctly—*i.e.*, true to Sense both with regard to the real understanding subject and its intention and with reference to Nature to be understood; and for that very reason he has made *the* decisive progressive step in the history of philosophy from which no philosopher who counts has ever since relapsed, however different the particulars of his teachings may be. For every problem which would connect a given subject with a given object in a particular respect can only be posited aright in one way. Only in this one case does one get the answer corresponding to the meaning in question. And since in the case of recognition it is a question of understanding which can only apply to meaning, the decisively important thing is the right insertion of a particular Sense-connexion, materialized in understanding, into the general Sense-connexion of Life; and the manner of this insertion depends precisely upon the manner in which the problem is posited; for only when related to Life as the first premise can there be any meaning in problems of recognition. Thus the greatness and importance of Kant can really be defined with absolute precision in terms of his way of positing the problem.

The positing of the problem on the abstract plane means exactly what inner adjustment means on the plane of Life. *But the former leads to the latter.* For to every kind of inner adjustment there corresponds on the intellectual plane a particular way of positing the problem, or, to be more precise, the positing, in every situation, of originally predetermined problems, and of such alone. From this ensues the possibility of influencing the adjustment of the whole psychic organism by means of a corresponding positing of abstract problems;

that is to say, of achieving something concrete by means of something apparently abstract; for the positing of the problem is only understood on the basis of inner adjustment, for which reason an understanding of particulars always at the same time means the understanding of those universals on which the former depend. All things within a Sense-connexion are so closely interwoven that the outside always at the same time involves the inmost. Now if we call to mind our considerations on Wisdom ancient and modern with regard to the creative power of the Logos, and if we connect them with our observations of today concerning psycho-analysis, the fundamental possibility proves to be a practical possibility as well: the metaphysical doctrine of the Hindoos that knowledge means salvation is *proved* to be true on the empiric plane corresponding to it. It has been *proved* that understanding can imply a cure. A complex breaks up when its causes have been understood; if a Sense-connexion of psychic life which has been put out of balance by repressed representations is seen through, it rearranges itself automatically. Here the workings of the Logos extend even into the physical sphere. Therefore, its power over the sphere of mind and soul must be even greater.

But everywhere it is precisely the way of positing the problem correctly, which influences the inner adjustment. This correct positing alone leads to Sense-perception. And now we arrive at the establishment of a further correspondence. The same correspondence that exists between what is inner adjustment in life, and the positing of the problem in the domain of abstract thought, exists between Sense-perception in the latter domain and *moral outlook* in the vital sphere. That

a moral outlook can be more or less noble, more or less profound, is known to all. But what many fail to perceive is the truth that the various values of moral outlook are incarnated expressions of *understanding*—the man who is better or more noble *knows* better than the obtuse or the bad man. Remember the results to which the analysis of the true significance of Christ led us: it was not His love as such, but the profounder understanding manifesting itself through it which has changed the world; it was not His particular doctrine, but the profounder inner adjustment it expressed, giving an entirely new meaning to well-known things, which induced a decisive inner progress. The new moral outlook of Christ was the expression of profounder Sense-perception. But on the other hand, profounder Sense-perception expresses itself as a new moral outlook in every concrete case; for such an outlook means that the word becomes flesh in the sense that *all* expressions of life proceed from the profoundest understanding. It is of no importance whether they are conscious of the Logos-roots of their Being: knowledge by instinct, emotion or feeling is not inferior to intellectual knowledge.

Now if that is so, then moral outlook as such must also be transferable precisely from the basis of understanding, for the Logos is the very principle of transferableness. Then the goal of the School of Wisdom to teach directly a profounder inner adjustment, which is meant to express itself in the form of a more noble outlook and ultimately as a higher level of Being, is doubtless attainable in principle. But it is certainly attainable only in its own particular way. The word becomes flesh only through personal understanding; for only understanding as opposed to information means a creative



process. Its way lies from within to the outside. Therefore, the School of Wisdom can never aim at imparting objective information, but solely at the personal influencing of man. At this point we have returned to the fundamental thesis that what matters is not *what* is said, but *who* says it. If an expression proceeds from personal understanding, then it means something different from what it otherwise does. Thus one may even maintain the paradox that two people who assert objectively the same—the one, however, from inner understanding, while the other only repeats mechanically from hearsay—differ far more than two equally profound men maintaining what seem to be opposites at the surface. For, from the viewpoint of wisdom, everything depends upon inner adjustment which is synonymous with level and moral outlook.

THE immediate concern of the School of Wisdom is the culture of inner adjustment and of that which results from it. It has no other concern, because “adjustment” means the ultimate spiritual part of our Being which mind can grasp; because the inner adjustment determines all facts and really means the hinge on which the world turns for man. Now the question is: is it possible to cultivate inner adjustment as such in a *comprehensible* way? For on the plane of facts it can never be ascertained, nor can it be imparted to him who has no immediate entrance to the realm of Significance, a fact proved by the unceasing misunderstanding of Kant.—Before our own time the aim of the task set to the School of Wisdom was unattainable. Up to our time the intellect was so undifferentiated that it could not grasp a way of positing problems, making it possible

to disentangle the Meaning from the letter which clothes it at a given time. And since the right way of positing problems represents the only way to influence the inner adjustment through thinking consciousness, the vital goal the School of Wisdom aims at could not be set forth as the aim of mankind, however large the number of individuals who have already reached it in the course of the millennia; for its Significance lacked the quality of transferableness. All ages up to the present considered Plato's truth as identical with the wording that expressed it in his day, and the truth of Jesus as identical with a particular dogma, and the level recognized as worth aspiring to, with the actual existence of the great man who once embodied it. To take the latter case, which is particularly important historically, in order to make clearer my point: instead of realizing that the importance for others of a great man consists in the depth of his Being as such, a depth which is, in principle, attainable by all and which he was only the first to prove attainable, wherefore everyone should seek to reach it in his own way, all former ages cherished the delusion that the particular unique individual was the eternal exemplar. It was only logical that from this ensued the imperative to imitate him. Yet one may try as hard as one can: one cannot really imitate anybody else; each must needs live his own life. This is why literal imitation of the greatest, wherever it really took place (in most cases self-deception precluded such an evil), has caused deformations and retrogressions. Today the vanguard of Western humanity has as a matter of organic fact grown beyond the state in which it was incapable of separating the Meaning from the letter. Today the organs of understanding of the ranks called to spiritual leadership

are developed to the point that the profounder meaning we stand for can become obvious to them; nay more, that it can become the centre of understanding consciousness. Our age has in principle ascended to the Fourth Storey of Language. Accordingly, a new fundamental adjustment to all problems of life has become historically possible, and that means, practically, it suffices that one single person should clearly formulate the possibilities and necessities in question—and soon all the others will advocate them as a matter of course; it suffices that one single person should provide the example of the realization of what is possible, and soon the latter will begin all over the world. But the example must be given; without Columbus even the egg of Columbus would not have been set on its tip. This one consideration proves the historical necessity of the School of Wisdom.

I SHALL speak of the particular way and the concrete goal of the School of Wisdom in the two following chapters. Here it is a question of fundamentals only. What is the ultimate and essential meaning and intention of an institution the adjustment of which is determined by the two co-ordinates of Sense-perception and Sense-realization, when this Meaning and volition is now surveyed within the general connexion of the present change in the course of the history of mankind?—No particular doctrine it stands for can be its last resort. It means something profounder. It has directly in view the Eternal beyond the Temporal, which bears the same relationship to the latter as Meaning to Expression. Only it means the eternal *within* the body of the temporal, not outside it. Therefore, on the other hand, it rejects nothing temporal. The psychic formations of

life, too, belong to the order of nature; they can be distinguished according to species and genera, just like the physical formations; and these species and genera are in principle immortal. This is true, at any rate, of their basic types. The Catholic and the Protestant adjustment, the inner adjustment of the idealist and the positivist, of the radical and the conservative, stand for primal forms of expression of the inner life, which as such will always re-emerge to the end of time. It is true that the particular types of an age are mortal; but first they go on living so much longer than most people believe, that even today in certain circles one meets with true representatives of the eighteenth century, of the days of the Reformation, even of antique paganism (in the more tenacious East the racial memory goes back much further even than that)—it is practically useless to fight them because, as long as they survive, they correspond to psychic fixations which, under all circumstances, decisively determine the appearance even of the newest Significance one may inbuild into them. But above all it is contrary to Sense, from the point of view of Wisdom, to fight the types of an age. In any case they only mean so many languages, in each of which the profoundest can be said. This is the only thing the School of Wisdom can and wants to teach. Since its ideal location lies in the realm of pure Significance, it cannot, for this very reason, be hostile to any particular religion, to any particular philosophical system, to any particular political tendency, as far as they stand the pragmatic test on their own plane. Its aim, on the contrary, is to inbuild something profounder into them all and to make them conscious of it, namely, its profoundest Significance, its *Lógos Spermatikós*. It



does not want to take away anything from anybody who attends it; on the contrary, it wants to make him richer by giving him what he did not possess before. The School of Wisdom points out what the various formations *mean* or may mean, and thus inspires them with a more deeply rooted Life. For it is its meaning, not its dogma, which keeps every religion as well as every social and political formation alive; if its meaning is lost, it is dead in spite of all institutions. Now if that which was stated in these sentences is the ultimate meaning and intent of the School of Wisdom, the latter does nothing else—to use musical terms—but strike the *basic tones* of the manifold melodies of religious, philosophical and social origin, which have developed and still go on developing. Then these basic tones are, in principle, its only concern. On this rests its historic task. We are living in the age of the most decisive change which has taken place on earth since two thousand years. Most spiritual and psychic melodies appear played out; everywhere there is a hectic search for new melodies, yet none that is found or invented proves satisfactory. The reason is that what is important is not innovation, but renewal. We have advanced too far to take any formation seriously as a last resort. This time the renewal can only be effected from within, by a revitalization *of the old as well as of the new* from the basis of profounder Significance. Therefore, from the point of view of true progress, it is a question of secondary importance which of the old melodies should be played on, or what kind of additional new melodies should be created: what is of first and foremost importance is to strike the basic tones for every kind of melody. Herewith that which the School of Wisdom wants



to achieve would be defined by one more co-ordinate—and thus its definition would be as complete as it seems possible to make it. It wants to create “level” as such by calling to life a profounder adjustment by means of the right positing of the problem. The profounder Sense-perception thus spontaneously takes shape in a corresponding moral outlook. But the last resort of this moral outlook is not to be found in any particular melody of Life, but in Life’s deepest eternal basic tone.

To strike consciously the basic tones of Life as such is *the* historic task which is incumbent on present-day humanity. Through all the changes of the melodies, these basic tones have at all times been the same. But never before have they been heard in and for themselves; they appeared indissolubly interwoven with some particular melody. Present-day humanity, which has discarded all inherited melodies, no longer hears the basic tones at all. Its ear is diverted by the confusion of discordant jazz bands. Therefore, men must begin by learning to hear the basic tones. This is the one preliminary condition of every new harmonization; for if that which is subjected to the changes of time does not attune itself to the eternal, then the chaos will never again become a cosmos. But on the other hand, *if* men learn to hear directly those basic tones, they will ultimately even become aware of the sound of those they could not hear hitherto for their abysmal depth; then a future of unheard-of promise and fulfilment awaits them. To still the tempests of these wild times is beyond the power of any individual or group. But something else can be done, and that suffices: in the very midst of the storm we can, year in, year out, sound the basic tones in the powerful and pure notes of a

deep-voiced bell, unswerving and undaunted by all shrieking and yelling around us. And when, then, the storm will have slowly calmed down, the call from the deeps will arise and resound ever louder and ever farther. What at first could only be heard by those who stood closest will finally be heard even on the other side of the world. It will find an ever more powerful echo within the souls; it will finally become their personal basic note. And then the new melodies, which will develop in the richest abundance, will spontaneously attune themselves to the Eternal, consciously understood.

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## II. *The Way*

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I CONCLUDED the last chapter with the words: the task of the School of Wisdom ultimately consists in this: to strike the basic tones of the melody of Life in its eternal process of change. It is Eternal Truth which ensouls all temporal Sense-formations, just as it is Eternal Life which animates every temporal Life-form. All the emphasis was laid upon the Eternal. But if, from the same point of view, we now consider the same problem with regard to the way leading to the goal, then, on the contrary, the *mutability* of the melodies, of the formations, solutions and results, appears to be the primary phenomenon, because existence in time consists in a succession of unique situations. On the phenomenal plane it is, indeed, not the general in the abstract sense, but the *unique* which corresponds to metaphysical reality, to the Eternal and Universal. Perhaps this will best become clear if I revert to the experience I made with almost every one of my disciples at the beginning of my work. The first question they asked was: What should *one* do in these times? and they made the abstract answer the condition of their personal goal. To this I invariably replied: There can be no question at all as to what "one" should do; the only thing each one should ask is: What shall *I* do? For, in any case, the "one" is the secondary result of the summing-up of individuals and individual decisions, and a favorable "one" can only result from

the fact that the majority of the unique personalities in question choose the way corresponding to their respective endowments. There is no primary "one." Whoever judges and acts from the basis of "one" binds himself to a projected abstraction and thereby loses touch with his creative Self. However correct an answer to the general question may be (for, of course, it is possible to construe what would be most desirable for the majority from the standpoint of universal welfare), it is a false answer for every individual whose Being and endowments it does not bespeak; for such a man is unable to vitalize from within what is externally expedient; yet that is the all-important thing.

When envisaged in the light of this instance, the right solution of the fundamental problem is clear at once. It is true that in the realm of Significance Unity underlies manifoldness. But its exponent within the phenomenal world is not the general, but the unique, because, according to the empiric circumstances the same Meaning requires a different expression. Therefore, he only is capable of making of what is eternally true a practical power, who grasps the unique character of the unique situations as they present themselves, and realizes the Eternal through them. For this very reason, the profoundest is only revealed through the personality and through the work of art, each one of which is exclusive and unique and exists but once. The region of the general concepts lies midway between the Eternal and the unique; their contents are formed by the abstractions from many uniquenesses according to the category of resemblance. Hence the general concept has no metaphysical background whatsoever; its only background is the understanding subject requiring the gen-

eral concepts as instruments of recognition. Therefore, they represent not something profounder, but something more superficial than the concrete uniquenesses. Therefore, no general formula will ever exhaustively express Significance once and for all; whereas every particular one is capable of doing so for the particular case exactly corresponding to it.—Thus, precisely because and in so far as it is essentially the same, the same Essence must, again and again, manifest itself in a different Appearance. From this it follows that every truth must be mutable and necessarily subject to change, if it is to be understood. From this it follows, further, that the best way to progress, to greater profoundness, to perfection must also be mutable and necessarily subject to change.

THUS, the idea of the way leading to the goal is shifted onto another level, as was that of the positing of the problem in the preceding chapter. No particular way as such can any longer be considered as the right way to salvation for each and all, for its effect depends on empiric premises. Only what is suited to a man, in so far as it is in accordance with his organs of understanding and fascinates his personal interest, evokes the spontaneous co-operation of the profoundest within him—and without such co-operation nothing happens from within. In so far the effects of Catholic discipline presuppose belief in Catholicism, those of the Buddhistic discipline presuppose belief in Buddhism, and so on. In the same sense symbols used for purposes of self-perfection only act as far as they are obvious—*i.e.*, as far as they represent the ultimate possible expression for a complex of Significance which cannot be evoked



by any other means. As soon as they no longer represent ultimate termini, thanks to the fact of a process of differentiation of spiritual life having taken place meanwhile, they have lost their power. Therefore, the ages which were bound to the letter were quite right to demand conversion for the purpose of gaining salvation; it is only upon the convert—that is, upon one who has learnt to believe—that a particular system of ideas acts in the way it is meant and intended to work. Now from the level *we* have reached we can posit the question in a different and a better way: we demand no conversion to any particular form for the purpose of realizing Significance, *we aim directly at Significance itself* and then create its corresponding Expression from within from case to case.

But our experience, too, proves the expediency of certain unchanging ways and disciplines for each and all. All higher religions, all systems of self-perfection, for instance, distinguish four stages which most people, whatever their particular faith may be, must pass through in the right sequence if they desire to reach their highest goal. In the same way, certain symbols which have, again and again, been employed in one identical connexion since time immemorial, also prove helpful to all on their way within the frame of the School of Wisdom. How is this to be understood? In the following way: every human being belongs, beneath his personality, as it were, to his species. Certain practices are useful to all men, certain stages of inner development must necessarily be passed through by all, just as the blood circulates within all, and all begin life as children. But just as in every single case the general fact of being a part of humanity has a purely personal significance,

in the same sense do the same stages and practices on the road to perfection *mean* something different in each particular case. Now we lay the emphasis on Significance from the very outset; thus tradition gets endowed with a new meaning. And in each case we *invent ad hoc* even what is eternally the same, and thus it gets vitalized. It thus becomes original in the true sense of the word, just as every new-born babe is original, no matter whom it resembles. The importance of this difference may be illustrated in the most convincing way by the difference between German and English uniformity: the former always is the result of a uniformation from without; that is why it implies and effects a lack of originality; it makes of the organism a manufactured article. The latter is the expression of *true* sameness; all do the same because their original nature prompts them to do so, and the result is a tremendous national power; for here the background of likemindedness is not an abstract idea, but the personal belief of all individuals. Our disciples all pass through spiritual exercises<sup>1</sup> which from the point of view of the letter are very much like those in use also in the convents. But since with us they are related to a different Sense-connexion, they work different effects. He who takes the sequence of symbols which are meditated upon in both cases for the expression of a revealed Truth, is confirmed in his particular belief by their means. For the School of Wisdom they only represent technical means for the purpose of evoking the inmost personal

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<sup>1</sup> These courses of exercises have been discontinued at the School of Wisdom since the above was written, because what they *mean* had become generally clear within a few years and "meaning" is the one thing that matters from my point of view.

Self, and therefore they do not typify the individual according to premised ideas—a thing in which the exercises of Ignatius of Loyola are so wonderfully successful, especially in the case of such as are born Jesuits—they help him to realize himself more quickly. Here, too, everything depends on inner adjustment. Those who participate in our courses of exercises are simply forbidden to inquire into the intrinsic meaning of the symbols, or to ask what attitude they should adopt towards them—from the very outset their attention is drawn to the fundamental fact that they themselves, under all circumstances, put the meaning into the symbols, and that the only thing that matters is to realize oneself as profoundly as possible by means of them, just as every individual consciously and actually pursues his own personal aims by means of his general human nature. Thus, those who participate in our courses of exercises, as opposed to the votaries of a Church, proceed from the premise that the symbols, rites and doctrines *in themselves mean nothing*.

This shifting of the problem obviously changes entirely the aspect of the thing. What in the eyes of the Church is arithmetic, as it were, means no more than algebra for us. If the basic adjustment of the teacher is such that he imparts what is generally valid as a personal prescription for each individual, then each one must *himself* substitute the figures corresponding to his own personality for the letters of the equation. What is uniform and suited to all never represents a last resort for us; it means only the undermost basis. On this basis the way to perfection, which always is a purely personal way, must be built up. Yet there must be some kind of transition. As everybody is a human

being in the first instance, he is also the carrier of a particular history which means so vital a premise for him, that he cannot really grasp personally what escapes his particular organs of understanding, shaped as they are in the course of a very particular history. A man *is* a Catholic, a Buddhist or a Moslem in the same sense that he *is* a Frenchman or a German. Very few only are such exclusively individual personalities and nothing else, very few only have attained such a degree of Sense-perception in itself, that these collective foundations need not be taken into account; and very few only represent mutations of type in the sense that other than their original foundations are more in accordance with their nature; in that case they are right to change their nationality or faith. This is why Hindoo religious practice rarely benefits Christians, whatever the personal standpoint of the individual in question; this is why only the Catholic really profits from Catholic exercises, and so on and so forth.

Thus, whoever would help a man to attain purely personal Sense-perception must *for that very reason* accept his historical foundations, whatever they are. And, over and above this, he must accept *his person as it is*. No prejudice should ever be allowed to interfere with regard to this: since the empirical represents the only existing means for the realization of what is more than empirical, absolute generosity with regard to all personal idiosyncrasies and inadequacies is necessary. Natural dispositions and personal opinions, too, are no more than an alphabet. Therefore, we tolerate for a while even that which is demonstrably wrong in the beliefs and ideas of a disciple, *in order* that he should

progress inwardly. If he is robbed of the language he is used to, he no longer knows how to express himself at all—quite apart from the revulsions of feeling and thought such violence causes within everybody. But if one allows a man to retain his own language and, for the rest, helps him into a different adjustment of his whole psychic organism, so that he learns to read even principles of faith and knowledge as symbols of his *own* profoundest striving, not recognized by him as such as yet—then he outgrows them soonest through his very prejudices.

I mentioned downright prejudices first because the true state of things strikes consciousness most strongly in its extreme expression. But the same is true of the particular interests of every single man. They must all be accepted; on no account whatever should any of them be destroyed on the grounds of some preconceived system of values; for that only which personally interests a man can become a medium of personal progress; if personal interest is not excited, the most vital forces of the soul do not come into play. Ascetic exercises should never mean more than lessons in gymnastics, carefully attuned to the forces of the individual, which steel and train what one may call the body of the soul and make the inferior subservient to the superior—without, however, weakening it in itself. This is why we do not teach our disciples to take an interest in other things than were used to interest them before; we teach them to take a new kind of interest in the things which interest them at the moment. As, in a course of exercises the symbol or the wording of a truth given out for meditation is not considered in itself, but only as a



means for realizing the profoundest Self, in exactly the same way we teach our disciples to make use of *every* interest, nor do we in any way oppose the desire for change; for precisely the continual fresh transposition of the psychic organism resulting from this desire makes it possible, thanks to the multiplicity of the given co-ordinates, to fix the centre exactly. Now, as soon as the essence of a man is evoked, it presents itself. And once it has done so, every Expression not in accordance with it gradually dies a natural death. In this way, the material errors contained in a personal view, which in the first instance were not taken into account at all, never last. It is not a refutation by others, but personal understanding gained through deepening which annuls them. Thus, he who seeks *his own* depth in *his own* way finds *the* depths.

Thus, the way which can lead a man to his goal appears mutable in the extreme. According to his historical and personal foundations, different things are good for him. Thus a system so childishly imperfect in its way as that of Christian Science can mean salvation for one of corresponding intellectual inferiority. Such a man may really penetrate to a greater depth by its means, just as so many whose minds are perverted by science can find the road back to Spirit only through Steiner's anthroposophy. Thus, the way of the warrior must be different from that of the business man, and again different from that of the religious man or the philosopher; for every inner adjustment implies a particular Ethos. The killing of the soldier does not mean the same thing as the killing of a civilian; with the business man, in whose profession the general law of life that one being

lives at the expense of the other is clothed in such terms that it is impossible to draw a sure line between legitimate and illegitimate profit, practices which would immediately corrupt the soul of a monk have no demoralizing effect. Now this recognition does not in any way lead to relativism in the usual sense of the word, it only shows that there are various ways leading to the same goal—ways which must correspond exactly to the given idiosyncrasies from case to case; it proceeds from an insight which is inconceivable to the relativist, namely, that the ways are no more than mere languages, carefully to be distinguished from Significance. In so far, the School of Wisdom, contrary to the first impression produced, is the one to stand for Absolute Truth; it even stands for Absolute Truth so absolutely and so purely, as never has happened before. Under no circumstances can Absolute Truth be found on the plane of the phenomena; whoever undertakes to better Life in the belief of having once for all grasped the former by means of definite formulæ, only achieves uniformity and thereby shallowness and poverty of soul. But if, on the contrary, men who cannot help, by reason of natural and historical necessity, using the most diverse spiritual languages are led to the same goal, *without being forced to learn a new language*, then the Absolute as such for the first time reveals itself as an empiric force, namely, in the recognition of the fact that diverse striving has the same meaning, whereby Meaning as such becomes accessible to consciousness. Then the one real unity which exists is revealed even to the not-mystic. It is that essential metaphysical Sense-unity which all mystics and sages alike have meant, but which will never

be graspable by means of abstract and general terms, because its exponent in the world of phenomena is uniqueness.

**B**UT this unity, the essential foundation of all variety, only reveals itself *in concerto*, in vital understanding, never in an abstract formulation; just as there is no abstract Life existent once and for all. Hence the fundamental impossibility to set up a universally comprehensible program for that which the School of Wisdom aims at. The particular practice required is necessarily conditioned by the particular vital situations; and whoever would reduce these to their common denominator, believing that he had seized the essence by means of the correct definition of this denominator, would have seized nothing. Thus, one who knew all my writings and lectures and did not know how to apply the general insights they contain to his particular case would have gained nothing from the point of view of wisdom; for wisdom means *Life* based upon understanding; to lay the foundation of that is our sole aim. The School of Wisdom cannot and will not impart any particular doctrine, for wisdom is not a special discipline; its task is to deepen the representative of any kind of "Ability"—be he a theologian, a philosopher, a captain of industry, a soldier or a business man—and thus to relate back any particular formation—be it a person or a thing—to a profounder Sense-connexion. The theologian who has stayed with us should progress as such, he is not to grow "wise" professionally—as though such a thing were possible!—and so on and so forth. In so far the School of Wisdom has no other and no less purpose than that of creating a new and higher life. Ac-

cordingly, whether it likes it or not, it must keep to the general conditions of organic procreation. All true religions recognize the necessity of the co-operation of writing and tradition, because the way a letter is understood is never contained in the letter itself, and yet understanding is the one thing needful. What tradition stands for within the succession of the generations is represented within each single generation by the vital atmosphere of a given spiritual centre as the result of the summed-up vital influences at work within it. Thus, even where the many are in question, the individual situation means the ultimate terminus.

The necessary outcome of this trend of thought is that, according to its essential character, the School of Wisdom can only keep to the way it is actually taking. Its activities must ultimately exhaust themselves in furthering the individual on his own specific way, and this can be done only in the form of a strictly individual treatment. Whatever part of its activities is meant for the many only represents the preliminary step or the way leading to this most important goal. Thus the way to perfection is individualized. Of course, this is possible only in the case of such who honestly seek, who hope to find and open their minds and souls accordingly; but they are the only ones we are interested in. In reality, it does not even suffice that the disciple should be a seeker: he must already have found to the extent that active longing urges him from within and that he is already striving for goals predetermined inwardly. For, as Christ rightly taught on the basis of a similar adjustment, to him only who possesses are things given. Only *an already existent* movement can be related to a profounder centre of Significance, exactly as only a life

which is existent can be made profounder. For Significance is not a content which can be imparted from without, it is the *life-principle* of every content. This is why the School of Wisdom not only considers all contents as such as equal in value for the time being; contents of some kind must absolutely pre-exist, in order that it should be able to perform its specific task. To him who desires nothing, we have nothing to say. If a man come with an empty soul, not even a God could fill it.

As a conclusion to this paragraph I should like to say a few words concerning the relation of the treatment given to the disciples of the School of Wisdom to the psycho-analytical method; for all that I have said in the above shows the existence of some kind of connexion.—That we aim at something different from the “dissolvers” of the soul is obvious; the psycho-analytical technique as such plays no part in our proceedings. But what is our attitude towards those who reconstruct the soul, who reintegrate it? Looked at externally, the difference between them and us is often very slight, however little the “facts” as such concern us. But our goal is different. We do not aim at the re-establishment of the normal state, where it deteriorated, but at the foundation of a higher level. This is the only aim we have, and it is so absolutely our aim that we do not even fear momentary disturbances of balance as a transitory state; we do not even posit the problem of happiness and contentment. Therefore, we have nothing to do with diseased persons as such. For the same reason we are not interested in mere character problems. The only thing we aim at here is the higher development of man which we try to bring about by inducing a profounder



inner adjustment. And we do not on any account conceive this as something static; which fact differentiates our aim finally from the aims of any kind of psychotherapeutics. If it is true that habit creates character, then, from our point of view, there is but *one* good habit—the habit of increasing onward and upward progress. We refuse to formulate any final goal, determinable once and for all, because that lies in infinity. . . .

**B**UT now we have reached the point at which we have to deal with the most important question: how is inner adjustment transferred? We found in the preceding chapter that it is possible by means of an adequate positing of the problem. But matters are less simple than that. A better way of positing the problem need not be understood as such, and yet everything depends on this. Actually, an inner adjustment cannot be transferred in the manner it could seem possible after what we said about it in the preceding chapter, for it always means an *a priori*. The fact is that inner adjustment can be transferred *directly*, without any kind of intermediary; this is why a personal field of forces is necessary for the purpose. Now the only possible way of such direct transference is what is technically called *suggestion*.

For many the word is in disrepute, because they believe suggestion to mean only one thing: to impose upon a person what he does not really think. But, fundamentally, it means something totally different: it means *transferring of Life in general*, and the interpretation of the word which has been usual hitherto applies only to a specialized and particular case. Imagination creates, first and foremost, not illusions, but *realities*. On its

own plane every mental image is a reality, whatever the external objects it corresponds to may be; thus, even he who transfers something purely imaginary, transfers something real, nevertheless. Further, the thing imagined becomes transmuted into a reality. This is a fact familiar to everyone in the case of the carrying out of a plan, or of the materializing of an invention pre-existing in the form of an image. But it is equally true with regard to human nature. By influencing another person by means of words and actions, one converts what was originally an imagination into reality; and it is only the depth, not the quality of the influence which distinguishes the change induced in a hypnotized patient from creative transformation. All self-perfection, too, takes place by means of corresponding representations. Self-perfection always is, in the first instance, the result of an intention—that is, a mental image; this image keeps the process going. And if one wants to accelerate or quicken it, one must systematically *meditate* (I use the word meditation as opposed to discursive thinking) upon such images and imaginations as correspond to the goal or lead to it; that is to say, they must be kept before the Conscious in such a way that they react creatively on the Unconscious.<sup>1</sup> From the technical point of view, the method in question is nothing else than auto-suggestion—and yet it is a creation of reality in the highest sense. The fact is that every creation ultimately amounts to suggestion. This is best proved by

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<sup>1</sup> I cannot and will not enlarge upon the technique in question here. Indications of literature are contained in the book review of the third issue of the *Weg zur Vollendung*. Beyond that I would recommend Erwin Rousselle's *Mysterium der Wandlung* (Darmstadt, 1922), and the fundamental work of Baudouin, *Suggestion et Autosuggestion*.

the fact that an idea becomes reality directly and automatically or spontaneously, without any intermediary process which could be influenced by the Conscious. This is true in the case of the carrying out of a plan, of an intellectual or artistic idea: we may try what we like—we can do no more than concentrate on mental images; the flashes of thought “happen” of their own accord, the logical chains are formed spontaneously, and the hand only performs in a purely external way what developed spontaneously from within. We never know in what way an imagination becomes reality, in our own case no more than in that of others; unswerving it goes its own way. We do not even know how we call out in our Conscious an idea as such; it is as mysterious a process and probably a similar one as the conjuring of ghosts. Thus, probably God Himself did not know how the world managed to develop, after His word had commanded it to do so. In all the cases we considered reality develops “of its own accord,” if only the right sort of idea was conceived and the right word spoken. We must therefore infer: *the Logos is directly creative.*

But now let us turn to the essential point: the reality transferred by suggestion is not a dead content of life, it is something alive; vital force alone wields suggestive power. This explains, firstly, why an apparently very simple word may sometimes induce the development of the most complicated things or processes: whatever is alive *is* a synthesis, no matter whether it presents itself in the form of the externally simple germ or of the fully developed final form; this is why within the organism every part has the whole for a background and can be read as the symbol of the latter. Accordingly, with a process of suggestion it is a question of transferring a

synthesis as such; thus the *kind* of synthesis which is transferred obviously depends solely on the person, whose forces come into play.<sup>1</sup> If, then, for the School of Wisdom a certain inner adjustment means the starting-point as well as the goal, in so far as the teacher is its living representative in whatever he says or does and the disciple is ready to receive precisely that adjustment by assuming a corresponding attitude and opening his soul to it, then that very adjustment of the psychic organism is transferred.

Thus the assertion of the preceding chapter, that inner adjustment is transferred by means of a corresponding "positing of the problem," is given a profounder setting. The positing of the problem acts as intermediary in the transference of the adjustment, for everywhere the Logos represents the principle of transferableness; but suggestion is the really active principle. If in our case the right way of thinking is of the utmost importance, this is because we want to influence the region of creative understanding. But through this region the inner adjustment is transferred direct. At this point let us recall what we have previously said concerning understanding. It is an *a priori*; it passes directly from one mind to another, and the means of expression only act as intermediaries, just as the light strikes intellectual consciousness by means of the eye: obviously, understanding, too, means technically suggestion; for it means the direct transference of a synthesis as such. As a matter of fact, the word suggestion stands for *the* way in which life acts upon life. This way is absolutely incom-

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<sup>1</sup> I have shown this at length in the chapters "Spiritual Parenthood" in *The Recovery of Truth*, and "Jesus der Magier" in *Menschen als Sinnbilder*.

prehensible, because it cannot be analyzed or dissected into parts; but this does not alter the fact itself. Nor does the prejudice against a particular kind of suggestion which hitherto bore that name alone, do away with the fact that it is only the particular expression of something very general. In reality, it does not argue in the least against a person, if he has a suggestive influence; on the contrary, vital influence is possible only thus. In the same sense, suggestibility in itself means an asset. One who cannot be influenced cannot in any way be helped; he only can progress who is able to surrender. Therefore, the goal of the School of Wisdom can only be reached by means of suggestion; and only by means of personal suggestion at that. It is true that books, too, have a suggestive influence. But their influence reaches down to such depths as are required here only in the rare case that the receptive consciousness has almost reached the level of development represented by the writer. Thus in the course of the centuries the word of Christ, too, has kindled directly the souls of a very few only, all others have been seized by it only when living personalities have acted as adequate intermediaries. Now to the School of Wisdom this rule must apply to the highest degree, because its essential aim is not a new doctrine, but a new kind of understanding.

**I**F IDEAS and actions are infectious, so is "level" as such. I need not enlarge upon this point because, since level is the word for inner adjustment qualified with regard to the value of depth, everything that applies to the latter is also true of the former. Besides, everyone will have personally made the experience that the mere presence of one person involuntarily lifts up or



enhances, while that of the other lowers or depresses. At this point we must approach another question: if personal influence alone changes the level, and individual treatment is required for the purpose—how is the School of Wisdom ever to work upon a large scale?—Let us first consider in what way individual men have ever worked along large lines. Then we shall find that the influence of the individual on a large scale has always consisted in one thing only—that *he became the centre of polarization for others*. It was not some particular thing about him, but his type as such which achieved conquest. Thus, the individual quality of Alexander the Great has for centuries determined the type of the sovereign man in Asia as well as in Europe almost in the same degree as the primary image (in the Platonic sense) of a physical type of organization is transmitted from generation to generation; thus, every national hero acts as a type-creator in his nation. The surrender of man's imagination to the image of certain living knights ultimately created "the knight" as the type of a whole age; the admiration for a concrete prince, be his name Richard Cœur de Lion or Louis XIV, actually created the nobleman of the respective ages. In this case, too, it is obviously the question of a purely suggestive process. Only here it is a case not of personal, but of mass suggestion, and the latter works in a far more elementary way than the former; it is indeed so elementary that actually only the analogy of physical procreation which also realizes something highly meaningful without the slightest idea, not even the consciousness of the meaning standing of the facts. The masses need not have the slightest idea, not even the consciousness of the meaning of the model according to which they shape themselves;

they form themselves according to it unconsciously and as a matter of course, simply because the type in question is thought of as the highest; this imitation takes place on the grounds of what is generally called prestige. And this is the only way in which the masses can be influenced at all; for with regard to the mass-psyche all more intellectual influences are absolutely of no avail; here it is pure infection only which leads to success.

Now this is true of men of determinant spirituality as well as of men of action, and even of heroes of fashion. It was not because of the true importance recognized as such of Christ, Buddha and Mahomet, etc., that whole continents became Christian, Buddhistic or Mahometan, but because the former enjoyed the highest spiritual prestige or because the prestige of secular power was transferred to them. Now if that is so, then the gaining of *direct* influence on a large scale cannot possibly be the goal of a spiritual centre of Life: the number of virtual carriers of personal understanding never amounted to millions and never will; and yet Spirit acts only through its becoming conscious within others. Under these circumstances, how should precisely the School of Wisdom attain influence on a large scale?—It can gain it, in spite of all the aforesaid; and it is absolutely necessary that it should do so if its impulse is to be a help to mankind at large. Only it must for that purpose make use of those means which experience proves to be effective. If the most spiritual influence is to act on a large scale, then the question is how this intention can be achieved in the very unspiritual suggestive way which alone is open for the purpose. We have already found the solution of the problem: *the highest degree of prestige must be won for the type recognized as the highest.* A

type, however abstract the word may sound, acts directly as a life-creating impulse wherever one surrenders to its influence, because it embodies a particular inner adjustment and because such an adjustment is not a formal quality, but, on the contrary, the most vital thing in life. It acts exactly in the same way that meditation-symbols have an enhancing effect on everyone, no matter whether or not a man understands their meaning. Therefore, there is nothing degrading or immoral in the technique of forming the masses independently of their personal understanding. There is, indeed, no other way. To the end of time it will remain the only way to help the masses. Yet enough can be achieved like that to raise the general level of mankind to such a degree that every more gifted individual can take the higher level as a starting-point. This is how mankind as a whole has progressed, thanks to Christ. Only a very few are aware in what an "unworthy" way, considered from the idealistic point of view, the Word of God is spread among men: what happens every Sunday in every church is nothing but advertising; an incessantly repeated extolling of the person of Jesus, like the cracking-up of a new article in a new business, is the canonical way to open the hearts to the Eternal. Thus, the image of Jesus, in the first instance, triumphed in public opinion over that of His rivals, above all of Mithras, simply by becoming "the fashion." To become the fashion is the first necessary stage of every kind of mass-effect; it is, above all, the first step to fame. For, however unfortunate this may be, there really is only this one way of very unspiritual suggestive influence for the purpose of imparting anything to the mass, whatever it may be. Thus, the question is not, *how* one should enlist adherents, for the

technique in question has been tested throughout the millennia, but *for what* they should be enlisted. Exactly as in the cases of meditation and of psycho-therapeutics everything depends on the "right word," even so everything depends here on the precise peculiarity of the type serving as an exemplar. As Christ was, from the beginning, adored as a God, He has not been able to create a type of man corresponding to Himself, it is the disadvantage of too high ideals that they do not act. Therefore, the right *man* must be set up as the ideal exemplar. Precisely our own time provides the very best illustration of the strong influence of the exemplar recognized as such for the time being. Pre-war Germany was militaristic in so far as the lieutenant determined the type, not in so far as it had a particularly great number of good soldiers; there is a clear correlation between the Presidents Roosevelt and Coolidge and the American nation of the respective times. Just so the danger of Europe's becoming Jewish, as far as it exists, lies in that direction, not in that of an inordinate increase of numbers of the Jewish race. Of all the nations of Europe, the English embodies the highest level of personality because it acknowledges the gentleman as a general exemplar. On the other hand, his intellectual level is disproportionately low. A far higher intellectual level than any which is today considered as exemplary must become determinant, if mankind is to progress.

For this purpose, then, henceforth the *highest* types, however little they may be understood, must become the exemplars. This general consideration implicitly answers the particular question as to how the School of Wisdom intends to work along large lines. Of course, there can be no idea of a direct influencing of the masses.



The School of Wisdom can take this into consideration even less than any other centre of the past or present, because it wants to create the highest level now attainable from the basis of understanding. For this purpose it must even practically restrict itself on its theoretically possible field of activity. Remember what was said at the conclusion of "The New Union between Mind and Soul" about the intersection of the angle embracing the problem of an age: only the clear comprehension of the *primal problem* as such leads to the solution of the problems derived from the former; all decisions are taken on high, and there alone. Hence, in the School of Wisdom that only should take place which furthers the new and profounder inner adjustment required, for only thus can that which is of ultimate importance take clear shape in the consciousness of the disciple; only thus is there no danger of later strata of influences effacing it; only thus can it ultimately act upon the world at large in its own pure form. This is why we admit no one who wants anything else than a furthering in the sense of wisdom; this is why we refuse to enter into abstract argument or to take sides with regard to particular problems. It is true that we have continually to deal with such, in so far as they represent the only means available to relate the profoundest in man with his surface; but they never mean an end in itself for us. Only the *ultimate* problem of Life, to repeat, concerns the School of Wisdom. Now this problem obviously arises within only a comparatively small number of persons; most men, to whatever depth they may penetrate, can only understand what are preliminaries from our point of view. Therefore we cannot take those into account. We can pay no heed to the argument which is, again and again, sub-



mitted to our attention, that so many might profit by us "on other lines": the forces of a lifetime are restricted; no one can do justice to all claims; everyone must give himself fully to what he considers to be his principal task, and in this case a many-sided activity would directly endanger the clarity of the impulse we stand for. If necessary, we must be able to be hard. In so far we have a right to devote ourselves to those only who are capable of understanding what is of ultimate importance to us.

*But precisely thus do we work for all our fellow men;* for thus we create the leaders capable of setting up and showing as a living exemplar the type which should henceforth suggestively influence the mass. This, then, means the final answer to the question as to how the School of Wisdom should work on a large scale. By forming the leaders it does all it can reasonably be expected to do. This task represents its only social aim. The School of Wisdom has nothing to do with mass-education or the promotion of general happiness. Nor does the individual as such represent a last resort for it: it gives to the individual only, in order that he should pass on the gift. It does not take his special wishes into consideration in order to make him happier, but because this is the one way to stir his deeps. Thus, it addresses itself directly to a very few. But instead of shaping tools out of them, it seeks to make them absolutely independent. Only such as are absolutely independent inwardly are appointed to represent its impulse. At this point we have reached the definition of the type that should serve as an exemplar: it can be no other than that of the *world-ascendant man* as I have described him in the concluding chapter of the preceding cycle; the

type of man who is superior to every name and every form, of the absolutely free man who cannot be finally bound by any tie. The type which shall henceforth serve as an exemplar is not a static type; it is purely dynamic, ever in motion and never resting content at a goal it has once reached; for solely character as an expression of freedom, not of limitation, is of metaphysical value, and there exists no other good habit than that of perpetually progressing onward and upward. Under these circumstances, the true disciples of the School of Wisdom must, above all, be independent men. In so far, precisely he who knows its letter by heart and swears to it has *no* right to speak in its name. In so far only a very few can be of importance for the purpose of making its impulse bear fruit, for most human beings are ready for anything except to be independent (for which reason the many who join us in order to be led, always leave us after a short time with a feeling of disappointment). But precisely thus does the School of Wisdom work for all. This is why, in principle, it does not tolerate "disciples" in the usual sense of the word; nor does it encourage an external organization of those who visit it, lest a sect develop out of it; therefore it does not allow anybody externally to speak in its name, because this might lead to a school in the usual sense of the term. In order to preclude any fixation which would be the death of what I mean, I employ, when the occasion arises, the following technique with regard to my disciples. At some moment almost everybody who has stayed at Darmstadt for any length of time begins to grow creative; of course, he wishes to talk about his new plans. At a certain point I put a stop to this. The rest concerns you, I tell you; you must be your own last

resort. For whatever you think and do from now on you alone are responsible; you may no longer rest inwardly upon the authority of another. For this reason, you should also forget me as far as possible, and on no account should you go on working in my name.—Does anyone who henceforth acts with absolute independence become disloyal to the spirit of the School of Wisdom? On the contrary, precisely by continuing to work independently, after having gained the needed deepening here, he transmits its impulse. It is its most essential characteristic that it stands for the highest independence and freedom.

If only a few of such leaders emerge from the School of Wisdom during the years of its existence, the fertilization of its impulse for the majority will be secured. For everybody, since he *is* different from me, for that very reason addresses a different circle adjusted to him by nature.<sup>1</sup> If in the course of the next decades there should be only a few hundred persons who live up to what we intend, the Western World will be changed within a few centuries. *For then the centres of polarization will be established, which impress their type on the majorities.* Then the mass-suggestion will begin of its own accord. The interference and summing-up of the various influences attuned in the same sense will eventually create so powerful a field of forces that finally no one will be able to resist its influence. But at the beginning a very few individuals suffice to transmit the impulse, provided they have really understood it; their number even should not be too large; for numbers inevitably make for superficiality, where the essence in itself is not yet quite con-

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<sup>1</sup> I have explained the exact meaning of the last sentence in the chapter "The Natural Reach of Personality," in *The Recovery of Truth*.

solidated. Nor need these few in any way belong to the so-called "best of their age." As a rule, each one of these best rules his own private field of gravitation, and they cannot be fairly expected to strengthen that of another. Moreover, only a few of the truly best are made thus, that they look like being the best. Whoever has *understood* our impulse, and he alone, is qualified for co-operation. For the rest, I, too, have made the time-honored experience that the best qualified are often those of whom one would least expect it. . . . No, from the point of view of the effect on a large scale, it is not in any way necessary that so very many should attend the School at Darmstadt. Though everyone is welcome to attend it; though we regret in their own interest that many of those, whom the School of Wisdom might further, keep away for inner or external reasons—large numbers are not required for its historic success.

And for this there is a yet deeper reason than those considered hitherto. How is a living impulse transmitted? Only by its representative becoming the symbol for another. Considered as an empiric being, no one can be an exemplar for others; for everyone must live his strictly personal life. But the exemplary depth of inner adjustment he embodies can act upon others as, during the course of spiritual exercises, a symbol acts on those who meditate it. Now this happens only when the individual in question understands or wishes to understand on his own account. Therefore, one can give no one what he does not desire to have. Nobody can do more than set up the symbol, hold it aloft, let it radiate its magic power—everything else depends upon the others. Thus, Christianity has only been propagated as a true vital power by the few who understood its spirit

of themselves: St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Francis, Luther, to mention the greatest only. In order to accomplish its task, the School of Wisdom need in so far do no more than set up the symbol of what is necessary for all—in this case the dynamic symbol of a particular kind of possible inner progress—and its task for others would be fulfilled; for nobody can be saved by coercion. *If* a person is capable of understanding, the symbol need only be shown to him—and he will accept it; if he is not ready for it, no power of persuasion can be of the slightest use. Therefore, one should never run after those whom one might be able to help. When asked why he chose no more accessible residence than the remote temple of Dakshinesvar, Ramakrishna answered: “Since when does the lotus flower fly to the bee?”—He was right. Only he who not only approaches a wellspring of spiritual life of his own free will, but who shrinks from no sacrifice in order to reach it, is so adjusted as to be able to be animated by it. In the course of my travels I came upon a delightful contrast-image to the aforesaid; I shall set it before you as a conclusion, because, as a set-off to the above, it should serve to make the true state of things particularly clear. It was at Peshawar, close to the frontier of Afghanistan. For several days I observed a blond and fair American missionary reading with tremendous rapidity the Gospel in the English language, on the squares and in the lanes, morning, noon and night. And there were always hundreds listening to him, although they knew no English, for Orientals have plenty of time. The missionary seemed highly gratified. Finally, I asked him: “What do you really mean by what you are doing? The people don’t understand a word of what you say.” He stared at me in amazement. “Why,



don't you know? Christ has promised to return as soon as the Gospel has been preached to *all* men. Well, that can be done. In America, a society has been founded which, with millions at its disposal, aims at having the Gospel preached to literally all men. When that has been achieved—then Christ *must* return.” Oh no, He need not return. Even Christ Himself could not save the thief on the cross who hardened himself against Him. Where it is a question of inner problems, nobody can be helped against his own free will. Therefore, the profounder a man grows, the less does he think of obtruding himself upon others even in the form of advice.

IN ORDER to create effects on a large scale, it does actually suffice that a spiritual centre exists and makes its influence felt. Everything else develops by itself by means of the existing spiritual, psychic and material forces. A hundred regular frequenters of the Darmstadt sessions—thus small is the world—would suffice to create the beginning of a tradition for outsiders, which would provide the written word with a living body. It is true that tradition's first-born frequently represents a body of complete misunderstanding. But that is a good thing: the discrepancy between the image and reality creates a tension which proves far more effective in the long run than pre-established harmony; through misunderstanding a man reaches essential understanding sooner than by immediate knowing-aright, because the latter “knowledge” need not be understood. Thus, the Hindoo sage, too, only gains the knowledge of absolute truth by progressively passing this judgment on everything that belongs to the range of the preliminary: *Neti, neti* (I am not this). The authentic tradition is con-

tinued in the School of Wisdom, externally in its geographical centre, inwardly within the compass of the inner circle of the chosen who proceeded from it—a circle which even today is no longer a small one. What is thus happening unnoticed by the world is absolutely essential. But the great conventions (*Tagungen*),<sup>1</sup> too, are of the greatest importance. In the course of these sessions the harmonious attunement to one another of many independent speakers gives a majority at least an inkling of the fact that there is something profounder than a determinate philosophy. The fact that debates<sup>2</sup> are forbidden, that the attention is directed more to the level of the lectures than to their contents, makes the attentive among the listeners involuntarily experience an adjustment of their psychic organism which renders them more receptive for profounder things. But the strongest effect is worked by the adjustment to the *personal quality* of the speakers as such, because this awakens the sense of qualitative value in general, which is the first premise of all higher development. Now the question may be asked: are the representatives of the School of Wisdom actually so perfect as to be able to serve as exemplars? The answer is the following: it is not the end achieved that renders a man productive of good, but the inner adjustment from out of which he might one day achieve the highest; it is the dynamism, the tension, the rhythm he embodies. Under these circumstances, the question whether the teachers at the School of Wisdom are “already perfect” really has nothing to do

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<sup>1</sup> I repeat here that all particulars, also as to the date of our conventions, may be obtained from the secretary of the School of Wisdom, Paradeplatz 2, Darmstadt, Germany.

<sup>2</sup> I have explained why I consider debate and argument as being solely detrimental, in the Introduction to *America Set Free*.

with the case. *There is no need whatever that they should be perfect.* It is a well-known fact that the pace-makers on earth were originally not more harmonious, but less harmonious and more difficult characters than is true of millions of average men; Luther alone can be shown to have been burdened with more passions, weaknesses and faults than hundreds of honest citizens. This cannot be otherwise, because tension and rhythm are transferred more strongly the more unyielding the material through which they must express themselves; a perfectly well-balanced man—supposing him to exist—would no longer be capable of working good effects on earth. What raised Luther above all his virtuous contemporaries was his inner adjustment combined with the power to achieve the triumph of the former. Now it is only the inner adjustment and the rhythm which concern *the others*; for these qualities alone are transferable. Whatever a man may be as a particular empirical being, he is for himself alone; for nobody else can relive his mode of personal life. In the case of an exemplar, of a teacher, the only question is, how far his influence is effective. If the disciple is able to accept what the former can offer him only when he believes in his perfection, he must begin by conquering the cowardice of his own soul to the extent that he can live without gross illusions. Whoever allows himself to be disappointed, whoever does not as a matter of course attribute every possible disappointment to his own lack of judgment and is therefore ashamed of it, must first grow beyond this primitive state.

This is how things stand with regard to others. But personally I am of the opinion that for the man himself, too, who serves as a model, with regard to him-

self, everything depends on inner adjustment and rhythm. Nobody can help or change his inherited nature; each one is yoked to the greater part of his external destiny without being consulted. In so far his person and his empirical life represent mere material for man, in the same sense as the material outer world; he must accept them as they are. The only measure of his personal value lies in what he makes of them. How much or how little he succeeds in making of them, is a question only partly depending on his moral outlook or worth. Some material is too unmalleable, many a life is too short. The original qualities are, for the most part, unalterable; many acquired qualities of the soul are the results of wounds which have healed but have left scars disfiguring it for ever. Thus, longing may be ever so powerful—not every soul will succeed in transfiguring completely the given material. But, as I said before, all this does not matter, for everything depends on rhythm and inner adjustment, because they alone qualify life as such, under all circumstances; everything else is dependent on the material at hand. Therefore he, too, who strives for his own perfection may take for his motto that glorious word of Krishna: "Work unceasingly, but at every moment sacrifice the fruits of your endeavours." Accomplished perfection, too, belongs to that external success which is ultimately irrelevant.—Accordingly, the question, whether those who work at the School of Wisdom have reached their personal goal really implies a misunderstanding. None of us claim to be recognized as exemplars. On the other hand, we need not be perfect in order to impart the impulse we stand for.

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### III. *The Goal*

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SINCE Significance can become a power in the phenomenal world in the form of intention, of inner adjustment, of rhythm, before finding its perfect expression; since progress consists solely in increasing inwardness, which is possible only in the case of subjects, and never in that of objects; and since accordingly the achievements of one individual can only become fruitful for others, when the latter involuntarily use them as a symbol of their own personal potentialities, there can be no question of the School of Wisdom aiming at an external goal. It is to lead to no results whatsoever, it has most emphatically not to become a success in the usual sense of the term. Here I even go so far as to say: if it ever becomes a success in a way tangible for all, it would have to be considered a failure. Inner adjustment cannot be transferred and propagated otherwise than in the form of living rhythm; and rhythm obviously only lasts as long as it keeps in motion; that is, to use a *métaphor*, as long as the music has not congealed into architecture. Now it is true that no spiritual movement before that of the Darmstadt centre has ever been based on pure adjustment; yet the whole of history proves our idea to be correct, however rarely its letter may have been understood. Every political, social and cultural formation which has grown rigid is for that very reason dead. On the other hand, the fact of a fixation having been avoided or missed, has in all great cases



been the chief reason of an influence unlimited in time and space. The truth of the matter has always been grasped by the myth: it makes all great renewers from Krishna, Osiris and Orpheus down to Jesus, Mithras and Mani die a violent death, and leaves the inferior one, such as Prometheus or Hercules, at least to end unhappily. The metaphysical background of Meaning for this is certainly to be found in the necessary contrast between the Eternal and the Temporal, between Light and Darkness, creating a tension which on earth generally ends with the seeming triumph of Evil. But on the plane of history it means that the rhythm remained alive, because no fulfilment within time had taken place. Accordingly, the biography of all true pioneers, who did not anticipate destiny (as in the case of those who, from the outset, refused to proclaim a definite doctrine and to play a particular part in history), mirrors the mythical image. The tremendous and never ceasing influence of Socrates rests upon the fact that he never nailed himself down inwardly to anything, for which reason his inner adjustment as such has remained a decisive factor in history; and that, on the other hand, he died a premature death for a conviction the contents of which were never wholly understood. Thus the example of Socrates, which was clearly defined only with regard to his inner adjustment and his way of positing the problem, meant a stimulus to ever renewed interpretations corresponding to the respective ages. If Jesus had left more than what is contained in the short Gospels, He Himself would have become a Father of the Church, and the Christian Church would probably have disappeared with so many others, even before the end of Antiquity. The Jews represent the most effective leaven

within the human race, because the tension between their belief of being chosen by God and their empiric inadequacy has never yet been resolved; thus, their Ethos could develop a rhythm of incomparable power; a rhythm which today manifests itself most powerfully in the form of the energy of the Anglo-Saxon races. St. Francis of Assisi wished his order no great success; from the very beginning it was meant to work only as a ferment within the manifoldness of Christianity. But if the reformatory impulse he personally incarnated has become the probably strongest and for ever most effective of all reformatory impulses within Christianity, this is due to the additional cause that already during his lifetime his order became something different from what St. Francis had meant it to be; thus, from the outset, his personality stood out as though in a halo of eternal light, as a symbol and an exemplar, even against the background of what is called Franciscan. But the most impressive instance of what is true in the case of all great men is provided by Confucius. He has the reputation of having been the most conservative of men, and therefore the prevailing idea is that he did nothing but give a final and codified formulation to what was a living reality in China in any case. In reality, matters are quite different. Confucius lived in an age very similar to the present. The ancient culture stood under the sign of Decline, chaos was reigning, waves of Bolshevism were flooding the Middle Kingdom. As a contrast to the chaos he knew by experience Confucius understood of a sudden the Significance of the old cosmos. Thus, the very thing that had long been dead to his contemporaries became once more a living reality to him. Thus, he succeeded in ensouling the old letter with a new

meaning. But even that would not yet have sufficed to make of Confucius the exemplar, the mainstay and the cement of the whole of China for all future ages. *The latter became the case because he remained outwardly unsuccessful.* His ambition certainly aimed at a position of external power; his was undoubtedly the dream to embody his insights in permanent institutions; for he was an extremely conservative sort of man, almost morbidly averse to innovations. For about a year he actually ruled as the minister of a small state. But then he was overthrown and exiled, he had to close his life as a homeless wanderer.

And it actually was his good fortune that he should have thus been severed from things temporal; for that very fact kept his particular adjustment and rhythm alive, that very circumstance surrounded the externally rigid doctrine of his writings with an aura of longing; for that very reason the canonical letter has continued to act as a thing in, and making for, motion, in spite of its conservative intention; for that very reason it has continued to fecundate China down to the present day. The fact is that motion and rhythm are what is finally important; they do not mean mere preliminaries, as most people imagine them to do, who then quite logically look out for definite teachings and goals, the realization of which they believe to decide the question of their importance. And in the case of the School of Wisdom motion and rhythm are of a more finally decisive importance than they ever were before, because from the outset we have laid the emphasis on the basic tones and not on the melodies, on the Meaning and not on the letter. Significance never means some definite content; it never can; it is the life-principle of the formation in

question; and for that very reason it never can be fixed once and for all on the plane of the phenomena. Whenever I am asked to define what I aim at in the form of a definite program, if possible in two words, I am reminded of that cat in a novel of Anatole France extolling the cook as opposed to her philosophizing master: "*Si celle-là dit un mot* (I am quoting from memory), *cela veut dire une omelette, une fessée, enfin des choses.*" Most people can only understand "*des choses.*" That is why they imagine that they can satisfy their real urge for greater depth by means of a belief in new objective revelations, such as are offered by theosophy. Yet the essential, as I have shown in the instance of Hindoo wisdom, always and necessarily lies beyond the plane of formations, and inner progress is achieved only to the exact extent that a man succeeds in establishing a profounder connexion with this Beyond.

Obviously, every rhythm in every concrete case expresses itself through some melody. But in so far as it exhausts itself in this melody, it is mortal. I, too, have to say what I say as a determinate person, but whoever believes its inevitable limitation to mean anything essential, entirely misunderstands me. As long as the power of my Spirit does not forsake me, nobody will ever succeed in nailing me down to definite "opinions"—with the help of God I shall always at the right moment succeed, so I hope, in precluding such a disaster by means of the contradictions required for the purpose. The more a disciple insists upon knowing my exact personal opinion, the more I indulge in paradoxical expressions, so that in the extreme case he gets into a state of unrest verging on despair, where he sought salvation and peace. But that is exactly what I intend: who-

ever would help mankind brings not peace, but the sword. The only thing that concerns the other is my inner adjustment, my rhythm. They must think out their own particular thoughts themselves, after the disquietude I roused within them has broken whatever was crystallized in their minds and souls, and after it has changed the general adjustment of their psychic organism.

And just as my person should never represent the last resort for my disciples, just so they can mean no last resort for me. It is true that I enter into their peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, but only for the purpose of reaching their essential Being, of giving it the right adjustment and transmitting to them the right kind of rhythm, *in order that it should then continue to vibrate*. The School of Wisdom can only aim at transferring rhythm; therefore, incidentally, no one misunderstands its purport more than he who considers it in the light of a sanatorium or a ministry. Most certainly every individual is of the greatest importance precisely in the ultimate sense; Christ's teaching of the immeasurable value of each human soul is thoroughly true. But whoever would act on the historical plane must think like the general of an army. If an impulse is to be inbuilt into the world, then it must be done from the basis of an adjustment rendering possible the most far-reaching effects.<sup>1</sup> Nor do what I call "real men" ever even desire personal satisfaction; their one desire is to continue to work, to act, to influence; so that the School of Wisdom fully comes up to the expectations of such as these. Inner adjustment and rhythm, and *not* their embodiment, are the truly essential things, the

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<sup>1</sup> I have explained the conditions of far-reaching effect in the chapter, "The Natural Reach of Personality," in *The Recovery of Truth*.



alpha and the omega. It is true that one can imagine a last expression of a truth—it would mean the last in time before the end of the world; a *final* one is essentially unimaginable; for expression is, *par définition*, dependent on empirical conditions, and Meaning can be understood through each one on the basis of sufficient depth; quite apart from the fact that no meaning can be considered as ultimate. For every meaning which has been understood and adequately expressed refers back to profounder ones, which then strive for earthly expression in their turn.

Thus it has always been the *unattained* goal which has proved creative. Now what distinguishes the impulse of the School of Wisdom from all former ones is, in this case as in every other, the circumstance that it is *conscious* of the truth, that it anticipates Significance and consequently triumphs over Destiny. From the very outset it centres itself upon that which alone can hold its own and endure throughout the changing ages. It calls itself a School, but it rejects nothing with so great a horror as the idea of acting as a School in the usual acceptation of the word. Nothing could be more flagrantly in contradiction to its meaning than the development of a body of disciples implicitly believing in the letter. Nothing can be further from its thoughts than the formation of a community in the usual external sense. It will never nail itself down to any particular doctrine as a last resort. It always stands for what is necessary in a given living situation: at one moment the ultimate, at another the most provisional; it alternatively represents views which actually contradict one another; for what it stands for lies beyond *all* letters. It teaches and cultivates self-perfection without a view to a goal

determined once and for all (although it *does* set a definite goal meaning limitation to each individual) because it is altogether impossible to imagine an ultimate goal; every goal attained presently transforms itself into a mere stage on the road to a still higher one. And if the School of Wisdom aims at forming character, it does so precisely on the strength of the premise that inner fixations are contrary to the freedom and therefore to the dignity of man. Now thanks to this it triumphs from the very outset over the possibility of its own death. It anticipates every possible future development and malformation and places itself above them. It anticipates all possible divisions and all possible enmity. Enmity is self-understood, and a matter of course wherever one form of life threatens the existence of another, and wherever the latter's soul is not superior to it. And enmity is perfectly legitimate; for no being can be expected to sign its own death-warrant for theoretical considerations. Now for the School of Wisdom friendship and enmity are of exactly equal value; for its one object is to induce a movement, and it makes no difference to it whether this movement takes its course under the positive or the negative sign with regard to itself.

But if friendship and enmity are equally welcome to the School of Wisdom, it looks upon so-called competitive movements with genuine good will. Its sincere wish is that a great number of formations of the same adjustment should develop: then the adjustment on which alone everything depends will soonest enforce itself, and its most adequate embodiment will most easily, as such, stand the pragmatic test. In the same way I welcome every philosopher of Significance. I am in no wise the only thinker representing the adjustment

I stand for, and I am glad I am not, for if I were unique, I should have every reason to fear that I was nothing better than an eccentric. Obviously, nobody has a right to assert that he stands for the same as the School of Wisdom, who merely founds an institution with the same objective determination; there must be a live *man* of the same adjustment who directs it. And from our point of view there can never be enough of such men. Every man or woman who has visited the Darmstadt centre should leave it as an absolutely independent individual; he or she is to become a new and sovereign centre radiating afar like a sun; he or she is to do what is in harmony with his or her own person, not mine; he or she is to speak *to his or her own circle*. And if one day the centre of another should correspond better than our own to what we aim at in Darmstadt, we shall be the first to acknowledge its value joyfully. To repeat: the School of Wisdom anticipates in the Spirit every possible change, and thus triumphs over every possible destiny.

IN SO FAR I have nothing to say in principle about its goal. Yet practically I can do so nevertheless, because every newly seized Significance is of necessity bound to a corresponding new expression. This is also true of that Significance which is defined by the conceptual co-ordinates of adjustment and rhythm: however impossible it may be to determine it on the plane of definite formations—yet as an expression it implies determinate directions of a possible development, and these only; and their ideal and fundamental goals can be grasped by means of general concepts.

Thus, the following may be considered *as the first practical goal of the School of Wisdom: to clear the way*

*on all possible planes for the recognition that man is unconditionally creative.* We found in the preceding chapter that a mental image is in the first instance not something unreal, but a reality, and therefore becomes transmuted into other forms of reality. Imagination really creates reality. Under these circumstances, even that which one is so apt to disregard as artificial or arbitrary, for example convention, represents in the first instance a new reality, or at least the premise for such. Indeed, nothing could imply a greater misunderstanding than to fight convention as such (however great the number of its special forms which should be eradicated); for that would mean fighting most of what makes a human being. For man is not "human" by nature, but by virtue of his creative spirit. Without self-erected barriers which appear arbitrary from Nature's point of view, there would be no love of a super-animal nature, no community life, no art. Love is entirely a product of art. According to the limits and barriers man set for himself, it has taken on a different appearance. Antique love was another than that of the troubadours; modern love was unknown to former ages. Therefore love could be done away with without the slightest difficulty. This is precisely what the recent culture of shamelessness is doing. How is one to court a lady who begins by showing herself stark naked? To begin with, the abolishment of all distance may certainly lead to a rebirth of the conditions in Sodom: in the long run it inevitably leads to their very opposite. No animal is immoral; only a few species know lust in the human sense. Where there is no spontaneous activity of imagination, the pure urge of Nature becomes the law. The First Fall is cancelled, innocence triumphs. Gentlemen and ladies become mere

males and females, who pass each other—with the exception of short periods—without being mutually attracted in any way.

That no State keeps together, that all social morality disintegrates as soon as determinate prejudices fall, is a fact we have all witnessed. What represents a prejudice from the point of view of the intellect is at the same time the condition for a higher reality.—Every art presupposes for its existence some kind of conventional checks of the creative impulse; for instance: plane representation, rhyme and the form of the fugue. But the same is true on absolutely all Spirit-determined planes. Kant has shown what an intricate network of conceptual relations is necessary, in order that what we science-bred human beings call recognition should become possible; it is absolutely bound up with axioms, principles and postulates, all of which exist only by virtue of man. This last instance, then, leads us back to the sentence that convention means, in the first instance, not something arbitrary and unreal, but a *new* reality, or at least the premise of such. The “subjective” nature of the forms of recognition is precisely what makes objective recognition possible. Thus, a new storey of reality develops out of every free intellectual construction, and it is impossible to foresee to what heights this process will finally lead. Is there nothing higher than the Love we know up to now? Rare mystics have already given voice to a higher kind of it. Is there no nobler community life imaginable than those which have been realized hitherto? There has never been a lack of such utopians as anticipated it. But a utopia in social life evidently means the same as a higher kind of equation means in mathematics, or a more spiritual kind of beauty



in art. Its realization is essentially *possible*, and not impossible, whatever may be the practical state of affairs; the only postulate which cannot be counteracted consists in that a construction should not be contrary to the conditions of its own possibility. For us human beings, Nature embodies no limit in the sense of its being above us. Nature only stands for a definite stage of possible reality, and it is a question of free will whether one makes a stop at it, whether one rises above it or reverts to it.

Thus, the Spirit of man is unconditionally creative; it is so in exactly the same sense that God's Spirit was creative when He created the world. This is true also in so far as a richer creation presupposes profounder Sense-perception; a statement which leads us back from another side of the problem to our former recognition concerning the correlation between wealth and depth. Mathematical science invented higher forms of manifoldness the day it had completely understood the meaning of the familiar ones. It has always been thus on all planes. Only mankind has never really become conscious of the fact, and that has been the case precisely in the two most important respects: that with every representation and invention something absolutely novel, something that never existed before, is put into the world, and its inventory is thus enriched in the absolute sense; and that this enrichment is a result of free creation. On the whole, mankind has stopped at the partial insight that imagination creates images of reality, that the intellect can interpret them *a posteriori* and that for the rest it is creative in the complete sense of the word only on a narrow and limited plane—that of invention proper. It is true that William James and Henri Berg-

son have paved the way for the understanding of the true state of things; but as far as I know, its Significance as yet means no self-understood premise anywhere, except with a certain class of Americans and some business men of a great calibre within all nations—men who do not really think, but who act instinctively from out of the right insight; for which very reason they are successful to an unheard-of degree. But the true state of things must be understood and thus become a self-evident premise, for then only will the sovereignty of man be able to develop freely; then only will his true history be able to begin.—To effect this may be considered as the first and foremost goal of the School of Wisdom. And that is precisely what it achieves in every case in which it succeeds in deepening, and shifting the centre of, an individual, from the basis of understanding, in such a manner that he continues to act as an absolutely sovereign personality; that is precisely what it achieves on a large scale by the example of many successes identical in Significance. This one goal which it has set itself would suffice to prove the historical necessity of the School of Wisdom; for it is hardly to be believed to what an extent the understanding of the Creative Essence of man is lacking with most men. Only very few have hitherto understood that Sense-perception means *giving* a meaning; that to give a meaning is *more* than mere interpretation; that it is a real creation in the divine sense; that the sense proper of a givenness represents no last resort, but can in its turn become the means of expression of *any kind* of Significance. And as long as this understanding is lacking, the truth cannot manifest itself. New Significance realizes itself only through free will; where the latter does not set in, because the corresponding kind

of understanding, the corresponding kind of faith, are wanting, no Sense can be realized. No wonder, therefore, that the whole of history, with the exception of rare personalities who give the impression of true magicians, seems to contradict the truth here asserted. But it will stand the pragmatic test as a fundamental truth, as soon as it has been understood and thus becomes obvious. For then the Logos will give a new direction to Eros, and thus, of a sudden, that which never was a reality before will become real.

**B**UT the new purely creative phase of the history of the world can begin only when the recognition of man's creativeness will have become flesh in the form of absolute self-determination. Practically the achievement can only manifest itself in the form of absolute self-responsibility—and to inbuild this as a conscious postulate into the world of history *is the second goal of the School of Wisdom* which can be defined once and for all. If understanding and not information is determinant; if it implies a fundamental difference, whether a man does a thing of free will and consciously, or else under coercion, mechanically and irresponsibly; if personal initiative alone helps the spirit to rule, then it is clear that an essential progress beyond the present state is possible only if men learn to bear a far heavier share of responsibility than they have ever done. Nothing, absolutely nothing should be taken off the shoulders of one man by another, or off the individual by an institution or ultimately by the God of his faith. Only in so far as every individual represents his own last resort by discarding all self-deception, all cowardice, does the personality become the focus of the Cosmic Powers; then

only do the profoundest of these come into action. Instead of theorizing on this point, I had better provide two practical instances of what generally happens, on the one hand, and what, on the other, should always happen instead. Most people desire to receive sound advice. Now it is certainly one's duty to impart one's better insight to one who honestly wants to know it, asks one for it. But this duty does not reach beyond the range of purely objective facts. To tell another directly what to do means presumption from the spiritual standpoint, and from the ethical it implies a weakening of the other's sense of responsibility, and therefore a consciously premeditated superficializing. Everyone must decide for himself; for only in so far can his activity, whatever it be, benefit his soul. Whoever, therefore, wishes to help another will never advise him to do anything he would not do of his own accord; for any action which is contrary to the profoundest Self is really a sin against the Holy Ghost; nor will he out of false compassion relieve him of his responsibility; he will rather, after listening to his tale, make clear to him what is his real innermost desire and then help him to live according to his own personal conviction, even if it is opposed to that of the adviser. Such advice alone means true help, for it makes a man more independent and stimulates the growth of his inmost powers. And it stimulates not only those of the advised: by helping another on a road which may be diametrically opposed to his own, the adviser himself grows inwardly. For in acting thus, he liberates himself, on the one hand, from the bonds of his own person and, on the other, he helps, of his own free will, to bear a responsibility, the bearing of which means a sacrifice to him.

The second instance is provided by the conflict between an idealist conception and the so-called realities of Life. I once had a visit from the proprietor of an advertising business who was faced with the dilemma either of working for the success of many things he could not deem ethically justified, or of suffering want with his family. I said to him: "By giving up your business for moral reasons you do not better the world, you only deprive your professional sphere of an honest fellow. By starving without its being necessary, you sin against Germany, which needs more people in safe positions today than ever before. You should posit the problem differently. Every day you should meditate upon what is undoubtedly wrong about your actions; don't on any account deceive yourself with any quieting considerations. But then take the sin joyfully upon yourself and go on working: you soon will find that by bearing the guilt cheerfully new forces will develop within you; you will become another man. And this will imperceptibly lead to the result that you will have to advertise in an ever decreasing proportion articles, the value of which you doubt. Finally, you will have to do nothing more of the sort, because your clients will belong to an ever better kind. In due course you will have reached a position enabling you to help, by means of economic power, a nobler outlook to triumph within your circle." This is the only way to solve the problem of guilt which presents itself to everybody who lives on this earth of ours. This life is inevitably tragic. The conflict between the law of Nature, in the sphere of which one being necessarily lives at the expense of others, and that of the Spirit, which demands that one should give without



desiring to receive, is irreconcilable.<sup>1</sup> No one has ever overcome this conflict in this world, nor will any man ever do so; whoever would live entirely for God in order to avoid sin must repudiate the duties towards men—duties which cannot be reasoned away. Most people get out of the difficulty by the policy of the ostrich. The so-called worst deny the law of the Spirit, the so-called best shut their eyes to the truth. They construe a theory according to which everything that occurs happens for the best; by means of this theory they repress all disagreeable impressions and thoughts; they stifle their feeling of guilt by the help of what they call idealism. But this kind of idealism rarely means anything else than a fear of admitting to oneself the truth. I am, therefore, originally most distrustful of the loud confessors of idealism; every frankly selfish man is nearer to salvation, for at least he has the courage to be truthful. This is precisely what an idealist rarely has. This is why such a man, if he cannot shut his eyes to the facts, is so apt to throw up his activities entailing guilt and thus avoid bearing the responsibility—as it was usual in pre-revolutionary Russia, where princes and princesses so often went “into the people,” as the Russian saying goes (that is they gave up their privileged position and became one of the lowly).

But this is not the way to improve the world or to become profounder oneself. Under all circumstances, everyone bears a part of the guilt of all, as was the teaching of Dostoyevski's Starez Sossima. And as to Christ, He gave no stronger proof of the truth of His mission than by being willing not only to take upon

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<sup>1</sup> I have developed this trend of thought in the chapter, “History a Tragedy,” in *The Recovery of Truth*.

Himself His own guilt, but that of *all*. One can inwardly work out and get beyond only that guilt which one accepts as a fact and takes upon oneself. Accordingly, the superior man bears his sin as Atlas bears the dome of Heaven and *does not even desire to shake it off*. But by thus taking his fate upon himself he conquers it. His consciousness strikes root in the metaphysical Essence; the latter's empiric means of expression grow transparent. Thus, sinful existence finally becomes an expression of pure Grace. The fact is that one must bear *all* responsibility oneself: this is the only way of essential progress for every individual as well as for mankind.

To teach this and to prove its truth by a practical example is the second most important task of the School of Wisdom. But by thus teaching complete self-determination and self-responsibility, it only proceeds further on the way which western humanity has trodden since the days of Socrates. The latter's impulse aimed at clarity. Clarity, indeed, can never be too great. We must understand all that is real, for only thus do we become its masters. On its own plane, clarity should stop at nothing, not even at any so-called mystery; for nothing is a secret in the sense that it may not be explained. If something must remain hidden or obscure, then the reason of that necessity must, at any rate, be elucidated, just as the *ratio* alone assigns the right place to the non-rational. And if any reality within or outside ourselves appears terrible and alarming, we must shed all the more light upon it, because we can hold our own only against what we have understood and accepted. But then increasing clarity demands a corresponding increase of strength and courage if it is to be borne: thus

the impulse first given by Socrates of its own accord debouches into that other which originally proceeds from Christ, but was defined only during the age of the Renaissance in the sense which marks it today and has made it the leading impulse of the West—that of complete self-determination. The most representative bearer of this impulse up to this day was Luther. This is so, although the goal he personally aimed at has been better achieved by Calvinism than by Lutheranism; for Luther's inner adjustment is the true *Lógos Spermatikós* of all reformed Christianity; and, as we know, inner adjustment is what matters above all. This adjustment, to repeat, demands absolute self-responsibility. All reinsurances must as far as possible be annulled. Luther and even Calvin did not completely succeed in doing so. Both ultimately reinsured themselves in God's will. But their God, so nearly resembling a man of flesh and blood, was in reality nothing but their own profoundest self, projected beyond themselves; their reliance on God, therefore, really meant self-reliance, as is most clearly demonstrated by the Puritan. It is one of the typical preliminary stages of self-realization, that the profoundest self appears as a "spiritual guide" with whom one does not identify oneself. But today perfect and uncompromising self-realization must be achieved.

Now we are taking the next step which is historically due, and at the same time the first beyond the achievements of the Reformation—for whatever progress has taken place since then belongs solely to the sphere of the intellect—by demanding *complete* clarity, *complete* sincerity and *final* self-responsibility. On another occasion I said that it is immoral to have opinions. At our opening session I showed at greater length how responsi-

bility of itself leads to insight; the present trend of thought closes this circle. If men would not be satisfied with mechanical fulfilment of duty, leaving to others the decision whether the duty in question is in accordance with the ideal; if it were self-understood that whatever is done by men must be done from out of absolute personal conviction—then the world would soon be transformed to an extent no utopian ever even imagined possible. For in the region of “causes” infinitesimal shifts correspond to the most tremendous “effects.” However strange it may sound, really no more is necessary than the victory of the inner adjustment advocated here, the conceptual expression of which, as I last worded it, is not even new, an adjustment innumerable individuals have always stood for, in order to found an ideal world. If this inner adjustment triumphs historically, the social problem will be the first to be solved in so far as it can no longer be posited in its present-day fashion. There is no social problem in a community composed exclusively of ruler types. If all would become inwardly sovereign personalities—and that is possible, for it is a question of inner, not of outward culture—there would soon be no more serf types, and an external state of things corresponding to the inner being would not be long in coming. On the other hand, no ideal of freedom can be realized where men are of a servile spirit. Therefore, the solution of the social problem is directly dependent on the inner transposition, deepening and re-energizing represented by the school of Wisdom. Consciously, it need not trouble about that problem at all, nor does it do so on principle; the only thing that matters to it, as stated

in "The Creation of the Best-possible World," is the problem of the intersection of the angle. But if only its impulse conquers, the empiric realization will take place of its own accord. As I have often pointed out, little can be changed with regard to the facts and contents of life; the old alphabet will probably remain the same down to the end of time. It is impossible to banish selfishness from the world, because if it disappeared our race would soon die out. One cannot abolish the existence of private property, for it corresponds to a primary urge of human nature; wherever it is abolished, it at once reappears in some round-about way which is far more demoralizing than any injustice of hereditary distribution. It is impossible to decree away the differences between men, for they exist as a matter of fact. If one hierarchy is overthrown, it is presently replaced by another, and artificial hierarchies always are less true to Sense than such as have developed by way of natural growth. One cannot make ideal business life as such, because profit is an essential part of it, and its particular æsthetics evidently correspond to the ultimate Sense of the World; for whoever acts contrary to them does not improve its condition, he makes it worse; no peasantry of revolutionized Russia proved so bad as that on the estates of Tolstoi, who gave away everything he had. One must have reached a very exalted inner state in order *to be able* to accept gifts; that is why in India it was the privilege of the Brahman, and in mediæval Europe that of the monks, to live on gifts requiring no return. Whoever has not reached that point is subject to a law of Nature akin to the physical law of the equality of action and reaction, which may be called the law of compensa-



tion:<sup>1</sup> this law states that whoever takes without paying a corresponding return is harmed in his soul; inversely, it states the well-known enhancing effect of well-earned possessions. And this at the same time shows us the true mistake of the capitalistic era. Its mistake did not lie in its technique as such; it lay in the moral outlook inspiring the technique, which in itself was justification enough; which adjustment finds its best conceptual expression in the belief in subjective rights. Classic capitalism held, quite in accordance with the spirit of what was objected to in the aforesaid, that it was permissible to take without giving correspondingly; that is, in this case, without rendering social service in proportion to the extent of economic power.<sup>2</sup> This certainly should not be; and it is no wonder that such an outlook called forth a corresponding revolutionary counter-outlook. Only the practical demands of the latter are just as mistaken as the former. The most important of its mistakes is this: that there should be nothing else than the income derived from work. Nothing can be said against the Meaning of this postulate; but all the more can be brought forward against its embodiment. The exact equivalent of this Meaning is to be found in the above-mentioned demand, that one should pay according to what one gets or has. But this need not be done in the spirit of the most inferior level, of the man doing the lowest kind of manual work; this would make all culture practically impossible. On the contrary, there

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<sup>1</sup> I have only now (1928) found that this was also Emerson's idea; as a matter of fact, I have never studied and hardly ever read this Spirit, with whom I seem to have a certain kinship.

<sup>2</sup> I wrote this in 1920, without thinking of America. I have since shown in the chapter "Socialism," of *America Set Free*, to what extent modern America has outgrown these defects of Classic Capitalism.

should be as much private property as possible, so that finally no one would have to wear out his life in the mere earning of his daily bread. There is no doubt that the ideal on earth would be that not poverty, but wealth should be a matter of course, so that finally everyone need only live out his highest faculties, as did the freemen among the ancient Greeks.

Now if we reduce everything that is necessary in this connexion to that formula, the consistent observation of which would make the realization of this ideal possible, we inevitably arrive at the following: *property must not cease to exist, but it must become a responsibility*—whereby the solution of the social and economic problem would prove to be directly identical with the victory of the impulse of the School of Wisdom. If indeed all would consider their property as a trust they are responsible for, it would be superfluous to redistribute it or to take it away from anybody, for it would make no difference whatever who possessed it. This was the state of things in the best periods of the Middle Ages; it is the case even today in the deserts of Algeria and Morocco, where the Marabouts alone are rich, but in return are bound to help all nomads and offer them a refuge. In those periods nobody complained, and nobody does so in those regions. It is true that here it is a case of a primitive state of things, the return of which no one can desire. But, though not the same, yet something *identical in meaning* must develop with us, too. Only when the recognition that all property means responsibility, that there exist no subjective rights, that everyone must give according to what he receives—though of course not in kind, but according to his personal best—only when this has become self-under-

stood can the social and economic problem be solved. But then the solution will take place spontaneously. And then all endeavours to transform the world into a paradise by means of external decrees, contrary to the norms of Nature, will cease of their own accord. As you see, the *one* postulate of pure self-determination and self-responsibility advocated by the School of Wisdom contains the germ of the solution of most of the practical problems of our age. I will, in a few words, indicate the solution of a few more of them, already dealt with implicitly. The only way to fight envy successfully and the levelling tendency corresponding to it is, that *noblesse oblige* should become the leading idea of all men. It is certainly necessary to level, only not in the downward, but in the upward direction. The natural self-love of every man ought to become the means of expression of a profounder inner adjustment, as has always typically been the case with the genius, who always lived himself out without consideration of others, but only in order to be able to give humanity the best he had to give. Thus, self-love should not be abolished; it should become the means of expression of a profounder Significance. At this point we have returned to our chief *Leitmotiv*. What is ultimately important is not the "What," but the "Who." The decisive and crucial questions can only be solved by means of the "Who." It is true that even thus they cannot be solved quickly; practically, every small "if" contained in the preceding trains of thoughts implies centuries of bitter struggle, but they cannot be avoided in any case. The only important thing is in what spirit these struggles are being fought. As long as those who are bent on progress do not understand what the

issue really is, they will fight in vain. But on the other hand, *if* they adopt the right adjustment, then they are sure to win in the end.

AS YOU see, although the School of Wisdom aims at no direct practical goal, it directly benefits all, because he only who has grasped Significance and has made it the centre of his consciousness and activity is superior to the alphabet of the world. It is useless to say more about these questions *in abstracto*, for concrete instances alone promote understanding and life; and above all I want to avoid giving the impression that I am nailing myself down to a final program—a program which I would have to disavow the very next moment in any case. I repeat again and again: the School of Wisdom has but one single aim—to transmit right adjustment. This alone leads quite naturally to the right solution of all practical problems as well which arise from case to case; their solution certainly is not the task of the teachers of wisdom, it is that of their disciples, whose particular endowments and fields of activity lie in that direction. (Of course, I do not here take the term “disciples” in the literal sense of the word—I mean those who have in one way or another assimilated the Darmstadt impulse.) As a conclusion to the foregoing practical discussions I will give a short sketch of the new view of a man’s profession or calling and of his work—a view which follows as a necessary corollary from the general attitude of the School of Wisdom. I will do so from the vantage of the first principle of the School of Wisdom, which is to consider all languages, all world-views, all endowment as being in the first instance of equal value. The said principle, of course,

applies also to the peculiar position of the individual in life. Yet apparently its validity on this plane is not clear from the outset: among the workmen, the apprentices, the business men and industrials, who called on me, a considerable number at first came with the secret wish to change their professions and become philosophers. In so far as their own professions were in any way in harmony with their natures, I strongly advised them not to change them: philosophical as well as artistic work is of value only in its highest expression, whereas every practical work is valuable; to choose philosophy as a profession is a sound plan only in the case of a man so qualified as to be able to find occupation for life in its scientific and historic material; whereas unscientific—that is, real—philosophy thrives best as an occupation for spare hours, because life-wisdom can only *grow*: and such growth is most successful, the less spare moments consciousness can direct to it at a time. And then I taught them to *transpose* the problem of profession. It does not matter which profession a man pursues technically, but what inner values he realizes by its means. Instead of aspiring to become a philosopher, in order to live for higher things, one should directly deepen one's humanity and work out its enhanced quality with the means at hand. Abstract philosophy, for its own part, is only *one* expression of vital depth; its language is not intelligible to the majority and, above all, only a very few know how to translate what they may have understood into other and more practical languages. Therefore, the existence of a large number of professional philosophers, however profound they may be, means no blessing for a nation. What is far more important is how great a number of profound



people in *all* vocations of life—because only through them can that which the philosopher may best be able to express in abstract words—penetrate into all ranks in the form of a vital impulse. Generally, it is of little use to preach metaphysics to men in practical professions; still less to demonstrate to them how one should act “in general.” But if a business man, for instance, were to find the best solution of a particular practical problem, which was possible only from out of profounder Sense-perception, his fellows will be ready to grow profounder in their turn. Wisdom is in no wise bound to philosophy as a profession and means of expression. What is of sole importance for man in this connexion is that which in my *Travel Diary* I called “perfection,” and should, I think, best call fulfilment or completion in the present context. Just as eternal life pulsates in every man, even so the profoundest can be expressed alike through every profession—only man must fill it with his own depth.

From these considerations, then, ensues a new view on the professions and various kinds of work from the point of view of their value. *In principle all kinds of work are of equal value, and all professions equally noble.* The one important thing is who practises them. In spite of all machines that may yet be invented, there will always be all kinds of work to be done down to the end of time; to reserve only the higher kinds for man’s execution will never be possible. Merely to hope such a thing implies a misunderstanding. But when *all* work is recognized as being of equal value and nobility—and that can and must become the case—then the wish to change this letter in the alphabet of life will disappear. Now this is the only idea of work which is true

to Sense. Just imagine what would happen if the stress of importance were to be laid quite generally on the fact of *who* does any kind of work—our earth would look entirely different in no time. Then the emphasis would not lie on the fact that, for instance, literary work is nobler than that of the shoemaker, but on that other fact that the former implies an immeasurably greater amount of responsibility, and therefore presupposes a far nobler outlook. A slovenly shoemaker here and there does harm to a single foot; a frivolous writer can easily poison a whole nation. Thus, it would be quite true to Sense to introduce, not a censorship judging according to standards abstracted from “things”—for every man may think what he likes, all political and other parties are legitimate as so many languages—but a censorship of personality for writers. Today things are all awry. The greater the power of man, the more does he seem inclined to misuse it. As opposed to this, most shoemakers think like gentlemen; for only a very few think it legitimate to make bad shoes.—Thus, the whole question would appear transposed if, not *what* a man does, but *who* does a thing, were considered as the important point. And an adequate answer along large lines would bring our earth near to a paradisiac state in less time than any imaginable external reform. The alphabet of the world will never be capable of much change. Everything depends on what man says by its means. Now if profounder Sense-perception and a corresponding outlook became the background of all work and all professions; if only eventually superior men were active within them, then we should be warranted to speak of so tremendous a progress as there never was before. Then only the highest

would be expressed through the medium of human nature; then no man of insight would posit the problem of changing the exterior of the earth, in order that the Kingdom of Heaven should be realized upon it, for the earth would already be a Kingdom of Spirit, without any external change having taken place.

Herewith I have told you more tangible and practical things about our goal than I originally intended. Before turning to the third and last fundamental goal of the School of Wisdom I wish to point out one more thing: we are, thank God, no longer the only ones who have shifted the accent onto the creative power in man and personal superiority; we only do from the highest point of understanding what unconsciously is already being done in the same sense on the most various planes. Whoever cultivates the genius in the child, and does not see foremost in it a kind of preliminary step to the grown-up man of purpose, acts according to our Spirit and Meaning. Among those known to me in this field, Maria Montessori shows the greatest amount of fundamental insight (I cannot judge of her practical successes). According to her idea, the most important thing is to awaken initiative within the child; all its activities are, in reality, directed not to an external, but to an internal goal, namely, vital growth—whoever understands this and lays the stress in education there, works true wonders; for every child then proves to be a creative genius; every child can be made into a being with so unwarped a soul and so noble a mind as otherwise grows up only among the most privileged ranks; education should not aim at the gaining of information and ability, at contents and prepared models; it should, above all, aim at moral outlook and inner adjustment.

Does not each one of these sentences sound like a quotation from my lectures and discourses with my disciples? What Maria Montessori achieves in the human being in its psychological beginnings, is exactly what we aim at in the case of the man who has enjoyed the education hitherto considered as the highest, because for us human education only *begins* on the level which, unfortunately, the overwhelming majority still considers as an altogether satisfactory end.

THE *first* goal of the School of Wisdom is to clear the way practically for the recognition of how absolutely creative we are as human beings; the *second*, to teach absolute self-determination and self-responsibility. But the *third and perhaps the most important goal is the question of level*. Level is indeed the all-important, the ultimately decisive thing. *Si duo faciunt idem; non est idem*. It is impossible to define values once and for all, independently of the depth of Significance they stand for in each case. An inferior level depreciates the externally most noble deed. On the other hand, a superior level endows every particular activity with a higher value. The degree of concrete superiority is the measure of the abstract value, not *vice versa*. It is so in spite of all professorial philosophy. Were it otherwise, Being would mean no more than efficiency, depth no more than superficiality. It is obvious that the recognition of this truth must meet with unusual resistance precisely today: the level of present-day humanity is so low that the mere instinct of self-preservation compels it to refuse to posit the question in the right way. Yet there is no salvation for the world unless this truth triumphs. Without that tri-

umph, the idea of quality cannot vanquish that of quantity. If development is again to take an upward course after its late descent, a hierarchic order of qualitative determinations according to the Hindoo concept of Dharma must re-emerge—only, of course, in harmony with our higher level of understanding. Formerly it was believed that only noble blood as such was a guaranty of higher quality. As opposed to this, Leo Tolstoi taught that only the peasant, and Bolshevism that only the proletarian, is truly a man. In both cases, it is a question of a confusion of Meaning with external appearance. Wherever noble blood was rightly considered as the alpha and the omega, this meant that the race or the class in question was as yet physiologically bound to the extent that it appeared impossible to attain the same object by spiritual means. And if in the Russia of Tolstoi the peasant alone could really pass as the higher man, the only thing to be deduced from this fact is how low the level of the Russian was; his inner development was upon so low a level that he could stand only the most limited means of expression. If a man is no more good as soon as he enjoys even a slight amount of education, this shows an alarming inferiority of level. Today the most advanced nations of Europe have progressed far enough to posit the problem on the far side of all empiric ties. Henceforth, personal quality as such is to be determinant; every reinsurance in heredity, not to mention external connexions, is to cease; everybody, in whatever condition he is born, is to obtain the position suitable to him. It is true that this is also the idea of Democracy. But what has hitherto been the result of the postulate of “an equal chance for each and all”? The predominance of the party boss, the



demagogue and the profiteer. This cannot cease before the question of level is posited with the utmost rigour in every single case and is acknowledged as being decisive; before public opinion proceeds from the recognition that Being decides upon the value of ability, the "Who" upon the worth of the "What," Significance upon that of the facts. As compared with the present state, the hierarchy based upon heredity was decidedly better; for, to a certain extent, level *can* be inherited by means of the blood. Now since the restoration of the latter state is impossible and moreover undesirable—for the purely personal quality is not perpetuated by heredity—the question of level *must* be posited in a more rigorous manner than ever before. This goes so far, as compared with previous states of tiedness, that every kind of fixation adopted once and for all must henceforth be judged as an inferiority. If there was a time in Europe when man began with the baron, the *basic* condition of leadership on whatever plane will henceforth consist in the attainment of an inner state in which man has as a matter of course grown beyond all specialization, professional determination and literal beliefs; in which he lives as a completely responsible being from out of his own creative self. This much was implicitly true, setting aside the mental side of the question, of every aristocracy in history. What is now to develop is the foundation of a similar state on a higher intellectual basis, liberated from all ideas of prejudice and caste; for there is no other way of rising to a higher state. Therefore, the third chief task, implicitly including the goal, of the School of Wisdom lies in the positing of the question of level in the most extreme and rigorous sense. Of course, it is out of the question

that all should reach an equally high level, even though every individual can progress far beyond it; and even though the general level might certainly—if the right kind of education is given to a few generations only—become equal to the highest level of the highest castes among all nations. Nor is it necessary that all should reach the same level; never and nowhere does equality mean a blessing, because inequality alone creates the tensions which keep the rhythm of progress in motion; and moreover, specific inferiority is generally correlated to specific superiority. The one thing needful is that all should recognize level to be the decisive quality; this would suffice to induce a new organization of the body of humanity amounting to a tremendous raising of the level of all. Tarde has shown that not only the cosmic, but also the historic, happenings consist, for the greater part, in pure repetition, which, in the latter case, is a result of imitation. Incredibly few original impulses have proceeded from the mind of man; twenty or thirty can at best be scored since man has been a dweller on earth. All further development rested upon imitation—for the kind of continuation consisting in logical development, differentiation and integration may rightly be called imitation, because such kind of mental work does not require the slightest originality. Now obviously everything depends upon *what* is imitated. If it is foremost the external, then a mechanical civilization like ours is the result. But if level as such were considered as being most worthy of imitation, then it would also be perpetuated. Then, not only the highest would be determinant in the long run—and this alone would mean a tremendous progress: involuntarily and all the more irresistibly, a general and continuous raising of level

would take place. *The* historical advantage of the British, as compared with other peoples, lies in the fact that they consider level as worthy of imitation above all things, in so far as everyone wishes to be an independent gentleman and strives first and foremost to develop personal initiative; thus, everyone from an inferior type develops into a superior type; thus leaders of the highest qualification inevitably come to the fore. Now one may ask: what is the criterion of a higher level and what is the standard by which it can be measured? Certainly, the existence of level cannot be "proved," for instance, by relating it back to an accepted scale of values; for every value from being a hollow abstraction becomes a reality only when related to a particular level. The fact is that "level" is an immediate "givenness," an intrinsic quality, like colour and form, on a different plane; a quality one must learn to *see* and which everybody perceives as a matter of course, as far as he himself possesses it. Men of a high level immediately recognize one another, whereas those of an inferior level, for their part, sympathize with one another, and only fail in their judgment when face to face with a man of superior quality. Accordingly, what is lacking is merely the development of the understanding for what is dissimilar to oneself, and its right estimation.

I HAVE said all I wanted to convey to you today. There is no doubt that in our day the majority finds it difficult to change its inner adjustment to the point of accepting the idea that "facts" and "things" do not matter most. Thus, even after all I have tried to explain many will probably be tormenting themselves

with endeavours to find a definition of "Significance." I ask you to abandon such endeavours. Simply allow the impulse given by this book to act upon you and then wait and see what it will create in you personally. This is the only thing that matters for every individual. What *I* think personally can be of no interest whatever to others—and definitions, however good, never succeed in making clear what one did not know, in some way, beforehand. Every normal person actually *knows* what the words "Significance" and "Meaning" stand for. I mean nothing else than what everybody can immediately realize. If you now try and make clear to yourself what I call Significance—as a disciple of the Baden School of Philosophy once did—by relating it back to "values," you define something well known and self-evident by means of something unknown and doubtful, which appears more intelligible to you only because you are used to it. No, give up all desire to define. Let that which I can give you simply work upon and within you, and wait and see what comes of it. Then, on every creative individual among you, the solutions of such particular problems as are his are sure to begin to dawn in due course. This is the *only* thing *I* desire to effect. The Philosophy of Significance is not one of contents, it is a vital impulse from out of greater depth than is unfortunately familiar to most; therefore, its true fruits will never resemble it outwardly. Whoever as an industrial, a business man, a statesman or an artist acts in a manner more true to Sense from now onward, has understood me better than anyone who gives a closer definition of my abstract philosophy, or develops it further. As a conclusion, I will tell you only one thing which resembles a definition, and since I shall do so

in terms familiar to you, it may help you to arrive more quickly at a complete understanding of what I mean. The ultimate terminus, undefinable as such, the Logos-side of which I call "adjustments," is nothing else than—*Life itself*. For it is Life which gives its contents a meaning. It is Life which transforms the oxygen and nitrogen within the body into something else than they are outside of it; it is the Life of the individual which makes of what he does a symbol of his essential Being. Now, for each of you your own life represents an immediate and obvious givenness, although you can in no wise define it and never even ascertain its existence on the plane of phenomena. And it is equally obvious that each one of you has an original personal adjustment which conditions all particulars—in exactly the same way as Kant's way of positing the problems conditioned all his critical results. Thus, under all circumstances, it depends on your inner adjustment whether your level is high or low, whether you are noble or base, whether your development takes an upward or downward course. Now psycho-analysis frequently leads to the result that the ultimate Sense-connexion on which a given life rests amounts to a lie. This lie finally results in physical disease, and one can cure the person in question only by substituting the vital truth for the vital lie. Are not most healthy Westerners in a similar predicament? Our traditional adjustment no longer suffices for the mastery of our Destiny. But we can alter that. And by altering it we can give a new and a profounder meaning to our lives. But by thus apparently reverting from the contents to what is formal we really retreat into the very vital core of Life. We lay all the emphasis on Life itself, not on



its contents. Everyone knows this shift of emphasis in the case of religion. We do the same within the whole sphere of Life. And thereby we relate its totality back to its deepest Essence. This is precisely why no detail of Life is too unimportant for our notice. What we aim at is to root the whole of human existence in Spirit in the same sense as in theocratic ages it was rooted in God, only in the higher form corresponding to the raised level of human consciousness. Religion proper under all circumstances presupposes a particular inner adjustment, and it is impossible to universalize it, because that would mean a violation of the laws of reality. In so far the stage of human development in which religion for a time deteriorated into a special discipline bearing an eccentric relationship to creative life was justified. What can and should take place today is, therefore, not a restoration of religion to its primeval level, *but the raising of all forms of Life to the level on which religion hitherto stood alone.* This is indeed the goal. Philosophy, politics, practical activity—whatever outward expression man's inner Being and Striving may be capable of—are henceforth to be given the same profound background which religion alone possessed in the past.

So far, so good. But now some may object: you are bending us downward to the earth; you have said yourself that the kingdom of the sage is altogether of this world. How does this agree with the ultimate longing of the soul? To this I will, in conclusion, answer in a few words containing the confession of my personal faith—I will be brief because all insistence on things ultimate encroaches on their Essence. Again and again I have pointed out that the Kingdom of Heaven be-

comes a reality only by being realized on earth. The process of its realization here at the same time represents the spiritual dimension of its own existence. But there is a reason touching us more closely still why I direct men to the earth and not upward to Heaven; the tasks upon this earth must be completely fulfilled, *because there is freedom only here*. In the Beyond freedom and destiny completely coincide; there, the mere concept of freedom lacks meaning. And therefore a higher development by man's free initiative is no longer possible. Whatever may happen in the Beyond can only be the result of an impulse to progress induced here on earth. There only that is worked out which had its origin here. Accordingly, there may be truth in the Hindoo teaching that the gods have to be born as men in order to grow beyond their godhead. Accordingly, Christianity and Islam must be near the truth when they teach that *this* life is ultimately decisive. Whoever completely fulfils his temporal task—he alone works, beyond the confines of time, for Eternity.



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